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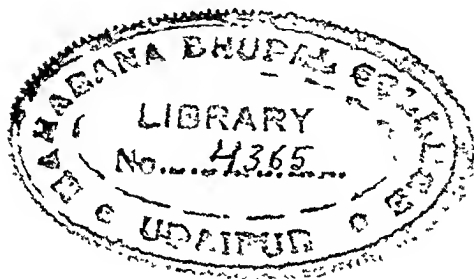
TWENTY-TWO STORY POEMS

Edited by E. E. REYNOLDS

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EDITED BY
E. E. REYNOLDS

AUTHOR OF
"JUNIOR ENGLISH TESTS" ETC.



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E. E. R.

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INTRODUCTION

FOR THE BOY WHO READS THIS BOOK

THE poems in this book have been chosen for your delight. Here you will find Dragons and Knights, Raiders and Pirates, Highwaymen and Smugglers, Buried Treasure and Ghosts. Some of these stories go back to the earliest times of civilized man; others have been written by living authors, so that a period of at least three thousand years of story-telling in verse is represented. All men at all times have enjoyed a good yarn, and although subjects do not change very much, yet each poem bears evidence of the period in which it was first written down. For instance, one way of finding out when the *Odyssey* was put together is to note the kind of armour described and to compare that with other historical records, such as carvings on buildings and paintings on vases.

Every race has its legends, and these are illustrated in our first eight poems. *Ulysses and Polyphemus* is one of the many stories about a legendary Greek hero with whose name you are probably familiar. Some day, perhaps, you may be able to read all about him in the original Greek; meanwhile you cannot do better than read Chapman's *Homer*. George Chapman was an Elizabethan, and it was particularly fitting that a man of the adventurous age in which Drake sailed round the world, and Frobisher sought the North-West Passage, should translate into English verse the account of the wanderings of an old Greek sailor. If

you like this extract, try to read the rest of the *Odyssey*, and later the *Iliad*, which tells of the siege of Troy before Ulysses set out on his travels. It was the reading of Chapman's *Homer* that inspired a great English poet, John Keats, to write these lines :

ON FIRST LOOKING INTO CHAPMAN'S HOMER

Much have I travell'd in the realms of gold,
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen ;
Round many western islands have I been
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.
Oft of one wide expanse had I been told,
That deep-brow'd Homer ruled as his demesne :
Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold :
Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken ;
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
He stared at the Pacific—and all his men
Look'd at each other with a wild surmise—
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

In the second poem you are taken to the East. The legends of India are not so well known to us as those of ancient Greece, but they are just as full of adventure and excitement. There are two great Hindu epics—that is, long narrative poems celebrating great achievements in history and tradition. Our extract comes from the *Maha-Bharata*, the *Iliad* of India ; the other epic is the *Ramayana*, the *Odyssey* of India. These have both been translated into English verse by Romesh Chunder Dutt, the first of his race to become a Divisional Commissioner in the Indian Civil Service.

You must not think of these epics as the work of individual poets. They grew out of the legends and

traditions of the people, and successive generations have added picturesque descriptions and fresh incidents to the original facts. You have probably played the game in which a story is whispered from one player to another, the final version very often having little resemblance to the original story. In the same snow-ball fashion these epics have grown, until some one has set them down in writing from oral tradition. It is true that we speak of Homer's *Iliad*, but Homer is an unknown figure, and indeed one writer has tried to prove that the author of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* was a woman !

Sometimes modern poets have taken old legends and retold them in verse. This is illustrated in the next five poems (III to VII). In *Hiawatha's Fastening* Longfellow retells one of the Red Indian legends that have collected round the name of Hiawatha, chief of the Unondagas and a great lawgiver. He it was who founded the league of the Six Nations, called the Iroquois, of which the Mohawks were members. These names remind us of the stories of Fenimore Cooper. Many of the Red Indian legends are attempts to explain the origins of things ; for instance, they explained the masses on the moon in this amusing way :

Once a warrior, very angry,
Seized his grandmother, and threw her
Up into the sky at midnight ;
Right against the moon he threw her ;
'Tis her body that you see there.

The Curse of the Treasure (IV) comes nearer home to us because it is based on the old Icelandic sagas, and the legends of those vikings who influenced so much our island story. Iceland was colonized

from Norway during the ninth century by some of the vikings at the same time that others were raiding this country. Their skalds or poets recited the deeds of their gods and heroes in verses which became the sagas as we know them. The story of *The Curse of the Treasure* is told by Regin the Smith, who fostered the young Sigurd, the Volsung. Regin and Fafnir were the sons of Reidmar the Dwarf. The gods lived in Asgard, round which was Midgard, the common world. Odin, the chief of the gods, lived in his palace of Valhalla in Asgard.

Sohrab and Rustum (V) takes us to Persia. Rustum was one of the heroes of Persian mythology; he is supposed to have lived for four hundred years, and to have died in 500 B.C. He was the Hercules of Persia, and among the many legends of him is that of his seven labours to slay the White Demon; in these exploits his horse, Ruksh, plays an important part. The Persian Homer was Firdausi, or, to give him his full name, Abu-'l Kásim Mansur, who lived during the tenth century A.D. His epic, in which he gathered together all the legends of his nation, is called *Shah Nama*. The poem here, however, is not a translation from that, but an original rendering of one of the Rustum episodes, of which Matthew Arnold had read in a Persian history.

In *The Slaying of the Dragon* (VI) we come to a version of the legend of St George and the Dragon, told by one of the great English poets. St George is the tutelary saint of England, and to slay a dragon was the usual exploit of the saints and heroes of Christendom. Spenser wrote in the time of Elizabeth, so that you may find his spelling rather puzzling, but those were the delightful days when spelling was a matter of taste

and not of rule. If you read this poem aloud most of the difficulties vanish.

Morte d'Arthur (VII) is a fragment of the mass of legends connected with the mythical King Arthur of Britain and his Knights of the Round Table. He and St George are our English legendary heroes. Sir Thomas Malory collected many of these stories and wrote them down during the Wars of the Roses; his book was among the earliest printed by Caxton. You would enjoy the quaint wording of Malory's prose. Tennyson has, of course, added things of his own to Malory's account of Arthur's death. It is interesting to compare the two versions.

Three of the old ballads are included (VIII to X). No one knows who was the author of any one of these; it is probable that some of them were the work of a professional class of minstrels. There are ballads of many kinds; some are historical, like those dealing with the Border raids (X), others are about the semi-mythical figure of Robin Hood, some are ballads of enchantment, like *Thomas Rhymer* (IX), and others are stories of stark tragedy, like *Edward, Edward* (VIII). Many of these are purely English, but some are known in various languages; the story of *Edward*, for instance, appears in other forms in Norway, Denmark, and Finland.

The next group of poems (XI to XVIII) consists of modern ballads, some of them written in the same metre as the old ones. The story is not always told in a straightforward fashion, because while the main interest of the old ballad-makers was in the tale, the modern poet is more often interested in the people.

Rokeby (XIV) and *Tam o' Shanter* (XV) are by two great Scottish poets; the second of these is a very

famous poem, though you may find the language a little difficult at first.

Poems XVI to XX are about the sea. *The Rover* (XVII) will remind you of another Elizabethan sea-fight retold by Tennyson in *The Revenge*; while *The Admiral's Ghost* (XVIII) recalls Newbolt's poem, *Drake's Drum*, which you may know as a song. *The Explorer* (XXI) deals with another aspect of English tradition, the work of the early pioneers, many of whom died without leaving any record of their adventures into the unknown; we can only imagine their stories, as the author of this poem suggests. The finest of the pioneers went exploring for the fun of the thing; they were not out to find any fresh markets or to develop trade interests.

Last Lines (XXII) was written by the author of *The Ingoldsby Legends*, and it has been put at the end of our collection because in it the author sees passing before him visions of old tales such as this book contains.

You will not, of course, find all the poems equally interesting, just as some people like one kind of novel and some another. But when you have discovered the kind of poem you like best, you should follow it up by reading some of the books from which these have been taken. For instance, if you like the extract (IV) based on the sagas, you will have a wide field of interest to explore. After reading Morris' *Sigurd* you could turn to the many translations of the sagas that have been made. Several of these are included in "Everyman's Library." Or perhaps you are attracted by the old ballads; then you will have much to interest you, for there are over three hundred of them. These are but two examples of how you can acquire new

reading interests from the small selection here given from the great wealth of English narrative poetry.

Try also to think out why you prefer some poems to others. To help you in this some exercises have been added; these will give you something to think over after your reading, and may encourage you to attempt to write some story-verse of your own.

ULYSSES AND POLYPHEMUS, THE CYCLOPS

NOW then saw we near
 The Cyclops' late-prais'd island, and might hear
 The murmur of their sheep and goats, and see
 Their smokes ascend. The sun then set, and we,
 When night succeeded, took our rest ashore.
 And when the world the morning's favour wore,
 I call'd my friends to council, charging them
 To make stay there, while I took ship and stream,
 With some associates, and explor'd what men
 The neighbour isle held ; if of rude disdain, 10
 Churlish and tyrannous, or minds bewray'd
 Pious and hospitable. Thus much said,
 I boarded, and commanded to ascend
 My friends and soldiers, to put off, and lend
 Way to our ship. They boarded, sat, and beat
 The old sea forth, till we might see the seat
 The greatest Cyclop held for his abode,
 Which was a deep cave, near the common road
 Of ships that touched there, thick with laurels spread,
 Where many sheep and goats lay shadowèd ; 20
 And, near to this, a hall of torn-up stone,
 High-built with pines, that heaven and earth attone,
 And lofty-fronted oaks ; in which kept house
 A man in shape immense, and monstrous,
 Fed all his flocks alone, nor would afford
 Commerce with men, but had a wit abhorr'd,
 His mind his body answering. Nor was he
 Like any man that food could possibly

Enhance so hugely, but, beheld alone,
Show'd like a steep hill's top, all overgrown
With trees and brambles ; little thought had I
Of such vast objects. When, arriv'd so nigh,
Some of my lov'd friends I made stay aboard,
To guard my ship, and twelve with me I shor'd,
The choice of all. I took besides along
A goat-skin flagon of wine, black and strong.

With speed we reached the cavern ; nor discern'd
His presence there, his flocks he fed at field.
Entering his den, each thing beheld did yield
Our admiration ; shelves with cheeses heaped ;
Sheds stuffed with lambs and goats, distinctly kept ;
Proper and placeful, stood the troughs and pails,
In which he milked ; and what was given at meals,
Set up a creaming ; in the evening still
All scouring bright as dew upon the hill.
There sat we, till we saw him feeding come,
And on his neck a burden lugging home,
Most highly huge, of sere-wood, which the pile
That fed his fire supplied all supper-while.
Down by his den he threw it, and up rose
A tumult with the fall. Afraid, we close
Withdrew ourselves, while he into a cave
Of huge receipt his high-fed cattle drave,
All that he milked ; the males he left without
His lofty roofs, that all bestrewed about
With rams and he-goats were. And then a rock
He lift aloft, that dammed up to his flock
The door they entered ; 'twas so hard to wield,
That two-and-twenty waggons, all four-wheel'd,
(Could they be loaded, and have teams that were
Proportion'd to them) could not stir it there.

Thus making sure, he kneeled and milked his ewes,
 And braying goats, with all a milker's dues ;
 Then let in all their young. Then quick did dress
 His half milk up for cheese, and in a press
 Of wicker pressed it ; put in bowls the rest,
 To drink and eat, and serve his supping feast.

All works dispatched thus, he began his fire ;
 Which blown, he saw us, and did thus enquire :

" Ho ! guests ! What are ye ? Whence sail ye these 70
 seas ?

Traffic, or rove ye, and like thieves oppress
 Poor strange adventurers, exposing so
 Your souls to danger, and your lives to woe ? "

Thus uttered he, when fear from our hearts took
 The very life, to be so thunder-struck
 With such a voice, and such a monster see ;
 But thus I answered : " Erring Grecians, we
 From Troy were turning homewards, but by force
 Of adverse winds, in far diverted course,
 Such unknown ways took, and on rude seas tossed, 80
 As Jove decreed, are cast upon this coast.
 Reverence the Gods, thou greatest of all that live.
 We suppliants are ; and hospitable Jove
 Pours wreak on all whom prayers want power to move,
 And with their plagues together will provide
 That humble guests shall have their wants supplied."

He cruelly answered : " O thou fool," said he,
 " To come so far, and so importune me
 With any God's fear, or observèd love !
 We Cyclops care not for your goat-fed Jove, 90
 Nor other Blest ones ; we are better far.
 To Jove himself dare I bid open war ;
 To thee, and all thy fellows, if I please.
 But tell me, where's the ship, that by the seas

Hath brought thee hither ? If far off, or near,
Inform me quickly." These his temptings were ;
But I too much knew not to know his mind,
And craft with craft paid, telling him " the wind
(Thrust up from sea by Him that shakes the shore)
Had dashed our ships against his rocks, and tore
Her ribs in pieces close upon his coast,
And we from high wrack saved, the rest were lost."

He answered nothing, but rushed in, and took
Two of my fellows up from earth, and struck
Their brains against it. Like two whelps they flew
About his shoulders, and did all embrue
The blushing earth. No mountain lion tore
Two lambs so sternly, lapped up all their gore.
We, weeping, cast our hands to heaven to view
A sight so horrid. Desperation flew,
With all our after lives, to instant death,
In our believed destruction. But when breath
The fury of his appetite had got,
Along his den, amongst his cattle, down
He rushed, and stretched him. When my mind was
grown

Desperate to step in, draw my sword, and part
His bosom where the strings about the heart
Circle the liver, and add strength of hand.
But that rash thought, more stayed, did countermand,
For there we all had perished, since it passed
Our powers to lift aside a log so vast,
As barred all outscape ; and so sighed away
The thought all night, expecting active day.
Which come, he first of all his fire enflames,
Then milks his goats and ewes, then to their dams
Lets in their young, and, wondrous orderly,
With manly haste dispatched his housewifery.

Then to his breakfast, to which other two
 Of my poor friends went ; which eat, out then go
 His herds and fat flocks, lightly putting by 130
 The churlish bar, and clos'd it instantly ;
 For both those works with ease as much he did,
 As you would ope and shut your quiver lid.

With storms of whistlings then his flock he drave
 Up to the mountains ; and occasion gave
 For me to use my wits, which to their height
 I strived to screw up, that a vengeance might
 By some means fall from thence, and Pallas now
 Afford a full ear to my neediest vow.
 This then my thoughts preferred : A huge club lay 140
 Close by his milk-house, which was now in way
 To dry and season, being an olive-tree
 Which late he felled, and, being green, must be
 Made lighter for his manage. 'Twas so vast,
 That we resembled it to some fit mast,
 To serve a ship of burthen that was driven
 With twenty oars, and had a bigness given
 To bear a huge sea. Full so thick, so tall,
 We judg'd this club ; which I, in part, hewed small,
 And cut a fathom off. The piece I gave 150
 Amongst my soldiers, to take down, and shave ;
 Which done, I sharpened it at top, and then,
 Hardened in fire, I hid it in the den.
 Then made I lots cast by my friends to try
 Whose fortune served to dare the bored-out eye
 Of that man-eater ; and the lot did fall
 On four I wished to make my aid of all,
 And I the fifth made, chosen like the rest.

Then came the even, and he came from the feast
 Of his fat cattle, drave in all, nor kept 160
 One male abroad ; if, or his memory slept

By God's direct will, or of purpose was
His driving in of all them, doth surpass
My comprehension. But he closed again
The mighty bar, milked, and did still maintain
All other observation as before.

His work all done, two of my soldiers more
At once he snatched up, and to supper went.
Then dared I words to him, and did present
A bowl of wine, with these words: "Cyclop! take
A bowl of wine, from my hand, that may make
Way for the man's flesh thou didst eat, and show
What drink our ship held; which in sacred vow
I offer to thee to take ruth on me
In my dismissal home. Thy rages be
Now no more sufferable. How shall men,
Mad and inhuman that thou art, again
Greet thy abode, and get thy actions grace,
If thus thou ragest, and eatest up their race."

He took, and drank, and vehemently joyed
To taste the sweet cup; and again employed
My flagon's powers, entreating more, and said:
"Good guest, again afford my taste thy aid,
And let me know thy name, and quickly now,
That in thy recompense I may bestow
A hospitable gift on thy desert,
And such a one as shall rejoice thy heart.
For to the Cyclops too the gentle earth
Bears generous wine, and Jove augments her birth,
In store of such, with flowers; but this rich wine
Fell from the river, that is mere divine,
Of nectar and ambrosia." This again
I gave him, and again; nor could the fool abstain,
But drunk as often. When the noble juice
Had wrought upon his spirit, I then gave use

To fairer language, saying : " Cyclop ! now
As thou demandest, I'll tell my name, do thou
Make good thy hospitable gift to me :

My name is No-man ; No-man each degree
Of friends, as well as parents, call my name."

200

He answered, as his cruel soul became :

" No-man ! I'll eat thee last of all thy friends ;

And this is that in which so much amends

I vowed to thy deservings, thus shall be

My hospitable gift made good to thee."

This said, he upwards fell, but then bent round

His fleshy neck ; and Sleep, with all crowns crowned,

Subdued the savage.

When loaded with his cups, he lay and snored ;

And then took I the club's end up, and gored

210

The burning coal-heap, that the point might heat ;

Confirmed my fellows' minds, lest Fear should let

Their vowed assay, and make them fly my aid.

Straight was the olive-lever, I had laid

Amidst the huge fire to get hardning, hot,

And glowed extremely, though 'twas green ; which got

From forth the cinders, close about me stood

My hardy friends ; but that which did the good

Was God's inspiration, that gave

A spirit beyond the spirit they used to have ;

220

Who took the olive spar, made keen before,

And plunged it in his eye, and up I bore,

Bent to the top close, and helped pour it in,

With all my forces. And as you have seen

A ship-wright bore a naval beam, he oft

Thrusts at the auger's shaft, works still aloft

And at the shank help others with a cord

Wound round about it make it sooner bored,

All plying the round still ; so into his eye

The fiery stake we laboured to imply. 230
Out gushed the blood that scalded, his eye-ball
Thrust out a flaming vapour, that scorched all
His brows and eye-lids, his eye-strings did crack,
As in the sharp and burning rafter brake.
He roared withal, and all his cavern brake
In claps like thunder. We did frightened fly,
Dispersed in corners. He from forth his eye
The fixèd stake plucked ; after which the blood
Flowed freshly forth ; and, mad, he hurled the wood
About his hovel. Out he then did cry 240
For other Cyclops, that in caverns by
Upon a windy promontory dwelt ;
Who, hearing how impetuously he yelled,
Rushed every way about him, and enquired,
What ill afflicted him, that he expired
Such horrid clamours, and in sacred Night
To break their sleeps so ? Asked him, if his fright
Came from some mortal that his flocks had driven ?
Or if by craft, or might, his death were given ?
He answered from his den : " By craft, nor might, 250
No-man hath given me death." They then said right,
" If no man hurt thee, and thy self alone,
That which is done to thee by Jove is done ;
And what great Jove inflicts no man can fly.
Pray to thy Father yet, a Diety,
And prove, from him if thou canst help acquire."
Thus spake they, leaving him ; when all on fire
My heart with joy was, that so well my wit
And name deceived him ; whom now pain did split,
And groaning up and down he groping tried 260
To find the stone, which found, he put aside ;
But in the door sat, feeling if he could
(As his sheep issued) on some man lay hold ;

Esteeming me a fool, that could devise
 No stratagem to scape his gross surprise.
 But I, contending what I could invent
 My friends and me from death so eminent
 To get delivered, all my wiles I wove
 (Life being the subject) and did this approve :
 Fat fleecy rams, most fair, and great, lay there ; 270
 These, while this learned-in-villainy did sleep,
 I yoked with osiers cut there, sheep to sheep,
 Three in a rank, and still the mid sheep bore
 A man about his belly, the two more
 Marched on his each side for defence. I then
 Choosing myself the fairest of the den,
 His fleecy belly undercrept, embraced
 His back, and in his rich wool wrapt me fast
 With both my hands, armed with as fast a mind.
 And thus each man hung, till the morning shined ; 280
 Which come, he knew the hour, and let abroad
 His male-flocks first, the females un milked stood
 Bleating and braying, their full bags so sore
 With being unemptied, but their shepherd more
 With being unsighted ; which was cause his mind
 Went not a milking. He, to wreak inclined,
 The backs felt, as they passed, of those male dams,
 Gross fool ! believing, we would ride his rams !
 Nor ever knew that any of them bore
 Upon his belly any man before. 290
 The last ram came to pass him, with his wool
 And me together loaded to the full,
 For there did I hang ; and that ram he stayed,
 And me withal had in his hands, my head
 Troubled the while, not causelessly, nor least.
 This ram he groped, and talked to : " Lazy beast !
 Why last art thou now ? Thou hast never used

To lag thus hindmost, but still first hast bruised
The tender blossom of a flower, and held
State in thy steps, both to the flood and field,
First still at fold at even, now last remain?
Dost thou not wish I had mine eye again,
Which that abhorred man No-man did put out,
Assisted by his execrable rout,
When he had wrought me down with wine? But he
Must not escape my wreak so cunningly.
I would to heaven thou knewest, and could but speak,
To tell me where he lurks now! I would break
His brain about my cave, strewed here and there,
To ease my heart of those foul ills, that were
Th' inflictions of a man I prized at nought."
Thus let he him abroad; when I, once brought
A little from his hold, myself first loosed,
And next my friends. Then drave we, and disposed,
His straight-legged fat fleece-bearers over land,
Even till they all were in my ship's command;
And to our loved friends showed our prayed-for sight,
Escaped from death. But, for our loss, outright
They broke in tears; which with a look I stayed,
And bad them take our boat in. They obeyed,
And up we all went, sat and used our oars.
But having left as far the savage shores
As one might hear a voice, we then might see
The Cyclop at the haven; when instantly
I stayed our oars, and this insultance used:
"Cyclop! thou shouldst not have so much abused
Thy monstrous forces, to oppose their least
Against a man immortal, and a guest,
And eat his fellows. Thou mightest know there were
Some ills behind, rude swain, for thee to bear,
That feared not to devour thy guests, and break

All laws of humans. Jove sends therefore wreak,
 And all the Gods, by me." This blew the more
 His burning fury ; when the top he tore
 From off a huge rock, and so right a throw
 Made at our ship, that just before the prow
 It overflowed and fell, missed mast and all
 Exceeding little ; but about the fall
 So fierce a wave it raised, that back it bore
 Our ship so far, it almost touched the shore. 340
 A boat-hook then, a far-extended one,
 I snatched up, thrust hard, and so set us gone
 Some little way ; and straight commanded all
 To help me with their oars, on pain to fall
 Again on our confusion. But a sign
 I with my head made, and their oars were mine
 In all performance. When we off were set,
 (Then, first, twice further) my heart was so great,
 It would again provoke him, but my men
 On all sides rushed about me, to contain, 350
 And said : " Unhappy ! why will you provoke
 A man so rude, that with so dead a stroke,
 Given with his rock-dart, made the sea thrust back
 Our ship so far, and near-hand forced our wrack ?
 Should he again but hear your voice resound
 His dart's direction, which would, in his fall,
 Crush piece-meal us, quite split our ship and all :
 So much dart wields the monster." Thus urged they
 Impossible things, in fear ; but I gave way
 To that wrath which so long I held depressed, 360
 By great Necessity conquered, in my breast :
 " Cyclop ! if any ask thee, who imposed
 Th' unsightly blemish that thine eye enclosed,
 Say that Ulysses, old Laertes' son,
 Whose seat is Ithaca, and who hath won

Surname of City-razer, bored it out."

At this, he brayed so loud, that round about
He drave affrighted echoes through the air,
And said : " O beast ! I premonished fair,
By aged prophecy, in one that was
A great and good man, this should come to pass ;
And how 'tis proved now ! Augur Telemus,
Surnamed Eurymides said all this deed
Should this event take, authored by the hand
Of one Ulysses, who I thought was manned
With great and goodly personage, and bore
A virtue answerable ; and this shore
Should shake with weight of such a conqueror ;
When now a weakling came, a dwarfy thing,
A thing of nothing ; who yet wit did bring,
That brought supply to all, and with his wine
Put out the flame where all my light did shine.
Come, land again, Ulysses ! that my hand
May guest-rites give thee, and the great command,
That Neptune hath at sea, I may convert
To the deduction where abides thy heart,
With my solicitings, whose son I am,
And whose fame boasts to bear my father's name.
Nor think my hurt offends me, for my sire
Can soon replace in it the visual fire,
At his free pleasure ; which no power beside
Can boast, of men, or of the Deified."

I answered : " Would to God I could compel
Both life and soul from thee, and send to hell
Those spoils of nature ! Hardly Neptune then
Could cure thy hurt, and give thee all again."

Then prayed he Neptune ; who, his sire, appeared,
And all his prayer to every syllable heard.
But then a rock, in size more amplified

Than first, he pulled towards him, and applied 400
 A dismal strength to it, when, wheeled about,
 He sent it after us ; nor flew it out
 From any blind aim, for a little pass
 Beyond our fore-deck from the fall there was,
 With which the sea our ship gave back upon,
 And shrunk up into billows from the stone,
 Our ship again repelling, near as near
 The shore as first. But then our rowers were,
 Being warned, more armed, and stronglier stemmed
 the flood
 That bore back on us, till our ship made good 410
 The other island, where our whole fleet lay,
 In which our friends lay mourning for our stay,
 And every minute looked when we should land.
 Where, now arrived, we drew up to the sand.

GEORGE CHAPMAN (1559-1634)
The Odysseys of Homer, Book IX

II

CATTLE-LIFTING

(i)

COMPLAINT OF THE COWHERD

MONARCH of the mighty Matsyas, brave Virata
 known to fame,
 Marched against Trigarta chieftains who from south-
 ward regions came,
 From the north the proud Duryodhan, stealing onwards
 day by day,
 Swooped on Matsya's fattened cattle like the hawk
 upon its prey !
 Bhishma, Drona, peerless Karna, led the Kuru warriors
 brave,
 Swept the kingdom of Virata like the ocean's surging
 wave,
 Fell upon the trembling cowherds, chased them from
 the pasture-field,
 Sixty thousand head of cattle was the Matsya country's
 yield !
 And the wailing chief of cowherds fled forlorn fatigued
 and spent,
 Speeding on his rapid chariot to the royal city
 went,
 Came inside the city portals, came within the palace
 gate,
 Struck his forehead in his anguish and bewailed his
 luckless fate.

Meeting there the Prince Uttara, youth of beauty and
of fame,
Told him of the Kurus' outrage and lamented Matsya's
shame :

" Sixty thousand head of cattle, bred of Matsya's finest
breed,

To Hastina's distant empire do the Kuru chieftains lead
Glory of the Matsya nation ! save thy father's valued
kine,

Quick thy footsteps, strong thy valour, vengeance deep
and dire be thine !

'Gainst the fierce Trigarta chieftains Matsya's warlike
king is gone,

Thee we count our lord and saviour as our monarch's 20
gallant son,

Rise, Uttara ! beat the Kurus, homeward lead the stolen
kine,

Like an elephant of jungle, pierce the Kurus' shattered
line !

As the *Vina* speaketh music, by musicians tuned aright,
Let thy sounding bow and arrows speak thy deeds of
matchless might,

Harness quick thy milk-white coursers to thy sounding
battle-car,

Hoist thy golden lion-banner, speed thee, prince, unto
the war !

And as thunder-wielding INDRA smote *Asuras* fierce and
bold,

Smite the Kurus with thy arrows winged with plumes
of yellow gold,

As the famed and warlike Arjun 'is the stay of Kuru's
race,

Thou art refuge of the Matsyas and thy kingdom's 30
pride and grace ! "

And when Arjun conquered Khandav, this, Uttara, I
 have seen,
 Brihannala drove his chariot, for I served Yudhishtir's
 queen."

Heard Uttara hesitating, spake his faint and timid
 mind,

"I would trust thee, beauteous maiden, lotus-bosomed,
 ever kind,

But a poor and sexless creature, can he rein the warlike
 steed,

Can I ask him, worse than woman, in the battle's ranks
 to lead?"

"Need is none," Draupadi answered, "Brihannala's
 grace to ask,

He is eager like the war-horse for this great and warlike 70
 task,

And he waits upon thy sister, she will bid the minion
 speed,

And he wins thy father's cattle, and the victor's glorious
 meed!"

Matsya's Princess spake to Arjun, Arjun led the battle-
 car,

Led the doubting Prince Uttara to the dread and
 dubious war.

(iii)

ARMS AND WEAPONS

Arjun drove the Prince of Matsya to a darksome *sami*
 tree,

Spake unto the timid warrior in his accents bold and
 free :

“ Prince, thy bow and shining arrows, pretty handsome
toys are these,
Scarcely they beseeem a warrior, and a warrior cannot
please,
Thou shalt find upon this *sami*, mark my words which
never fail,
Stately bows and wingéd arrows, banners swords and 80
coats of mail,
And a bow which strongest warriors scarce can in the
battle bend,
And the limits of a kingdom widen when that bow is
strained,
Tall and slender like a palm-tree, worthy of a warrior
bold,
Smooth the wood of hardened fibre, and the ends are
yellow gold ! ”
Doubting still Uttara answered : “ In this *sami*’s gloomy
shade
Corpses hang since many seasons in their wrappings
duly laid,
Now I mark them all suspended, horrent, in the open
air,
And to touch the unclean objects, friend, is more than I
can dare ! ”
“ Fear not, warrior,” Arjun answered, “ for the tree
conceals no dead,
Warriors’ weapons, cased like corpses, lurk within its 90
gloomy shade,
And I ask thee, Prince of Matsya, not to touch an
unclean thing,
But unto a chief and warrior weapons and his arms to
bring.”
Prince Uttara gently lighted, climbed the dark and leafy
tree,

36 TWENTY-TWO STORY POEMS

Arjun from the Prince's chariot bade him speed the
 arms to free,
 And the young Prince cut the wrappings; lo! the
 shining bows appear
 Twisted, voiced like hissing serpents, like the bright
 stars glistening clear!
 Seized with wonder Prince Uttara silently the weapons
 eyed,
 And unto his chariot-driver thus in trembling accents
 cried :
 " Whose this bow so tall and stately, speak to me, my
 gentle friend,
 On the wood are golden bosses, tipped with gold is 100
 either end,
 Whose this second ponderous weapon stout and massive
 in the hold,
 On the staff are worked by artists elephants of burnished
 gold,
 And what great and mighty monarch owns this other
 bow of might,
 Set with golden glittering insects on its ebony back so
 bright,
 Golden suns of wondrous brightness on this fourth
 their lustre lend,
 Who may be the unknown archer who this stately bow
 can bend,
 And the fifth is set with jewels, gems and stones of
 purest ray,
 Golden fire-flies glint and sparkle in the yellow light of
 day!
 Who doth own these shining arrows with their heads in
 gold encased,
 Thousand arrows bright and feathered in the golden 110
 quivers placed,

Next are these with vulture-feather, golden-yellow in
their hue,
Made of iron keen and whetted, whose may be these
arrows true,
Next upon this sable quiver jungle tigers gleam in gold,
And these keen and boar-eared arrows speak some
chieftain fierce and bold,
Fourth are these seven hundred arrows, crescent in
their shining blade,
Thirsting for the blood of foemen and by cunning
artists made,
And the fifth are golden-crested, made of tempered
steel and bright,
Parrot feathers wing these arrows whetted and of
wondrous might !
Mark again this wondrous sabre, shape of toad is on the
hilt,
On the blade a toad is graven and the scabbard nobly 120
gilt,
Larger, stouter is this second in its sheath of tiger-skin,
Decked with bells and gold-surmounted and the blade
is bright and keen,
Next this scimitar so curious by the skilled *Nishadas*
made,
Scabbard made of wondrous cowhide sheathes the
bright and polished blade,
Fourth, a long and beauteous weapon glittering sable
in its hue,
With its sheath of softer goat-skin worked with gold on
azure blue,
And the fifth is broad and massive over thirty fingers
long,
Golden-sheathed and gold embossed like a snake or
fiery tongue ! ”

38 TWENTY-TWO STORY POEMS

Joyously responded Arjun : " Mark this bow embossed
with gold,
'Tis the wondrous bow, *Gandiva*, worthy of a warrior 130

Gift of heaven 1 to archer Arjun kindly gods this
weapon sent,
And the confines of a kingdom widen when the bow is
bent,

Next, this mighty ponderous weapon worked with
elephants of gold,
With this bow the stalwart Bhima hath the tide of con-
quests rolled,

And the third with golden insects by a cunning hand
inlaid,
'Tis Yudhishthir's royal weapon by the noblest artists
made,

Next the bow with solar lustre brave Nakula wields in
fight,
And the fifth is Sahadeva's, decked with gems and
jewels bright !

Mark again these thousand arrows, unto Arjun they
belong,
And the darts whose blades are crescent unto Bhima 140
brave and strong,

Boar-ear shafts are young Nakula's, in the tiger-quiver
cased,
Sahadeva owns the arrows with the parrot's feather
graced,

These three-knotted shining arrows, thick and yellow
vulture-plumed,
They belong to King Yudhishthir, with their heads by
gold illumed !

Listen more, if of these sabres, Prince of Matsya, thou
wouldst know,

Arjun's sword is toad-engraven, ever dreaded by the
foe,
And the sword in tiger-scabbard, massive and of
mighty strength,
None save tiger-waisted Bhima wields that sword of
wondrous length,
Next the sabre golden-hilted, sable and with gold em-
bossed,
Brave Yudhishtir kept that sabre when the king his 150
kingdom lost,
Yonder sword with goat-skin scabbard brave Nakula
wields in war,
In the cowhide Sahadeva keeps his shining scimi-
tar ! ”
“ Strange thy accents,” spake Uttara, “ stranger are the
weapons bright,
Are they arms of sons of Pandu famed on earth for
matchless might,
Where are now those pious princes by a dire misfortune
crossed,
Warlike Arjun, good Yudhishtir, by his subjects loved
and lost,
Where is tiger-waisted Bhima, matchless fighter in the
field,
And the brave and twin-born brothers skilled the arms
of war to wield ?
O'er a game they lost their empire and we heard of them
no more,
Or perchance they lonesome wander on some wild and 160
distant shore,
And Draupadi, noble Princess, purest best of woman-
kind,
Doth she wander with Yudhishtir, changeless in her
heart and mind ? ”

Proudly answered valiant Arjun, and a smile was on his face,
 " Not in distant lands the brothers do their wandering footsteps trace,
 In thy father's court disguised lives Yudhishtir just and good,
 Bhima in thy father's palace as a cook prepares the food,
 Brave Nakula guards the horses, Sahadeva tends the kine,
 As thy sister's waiting-woman doth the fair Draupadi shine,
Pardon, Prince, these rings and bangles, pardon strange unmanly guise,
'Tis no poor and sexless creature,—Arjun greets thy 170
wondering eyes ! "

(iv)

RESCUE OF THE CATTLE

Arjun decked his mighty stature in the gleaming arms of war,
 And with voice of distant thunder rolled the mighty battle-car,
 And the Kurus marked with wonder Arjun's standard lifted proud,
 Heard with dread the deep *Gandiva* sounding oft and sounding loud,
 And they knew the wondrous Bowman wheeling round the battle-car,
 And with doubts and grave misgivings whispered Drona skilled in war :

"That is Arjun's monkey-standard, how it greets my
ancient eyes,
Well the Kurus know the standard like a comet in the
skies,
Hear ye not the deep *Gandiva* ? How my ear its accents
greet,
Mark ye not these pointed arrows falling prone before 180
my feet,
By these darts his salutation to his teacher loved
of old,
Years of exile now completed, Arjun sends with greet-
ings bold !
How the gallant Prince advances ! Now I mark his
form and face,
Issuing from his dark concealment with a brighter,
haughtier grace,
Well I know his bow and arrows and I know his
standard well,
And the deep and echoing accents of his far-resounding
shell,
In his shining arms accoutred, gleaming in his helmet
dread,
Shines he like the flame of *homa* by libations duly
fed !"
Arjun marked the Kuru warriors arming for th' im-
pending war,
Whispered thus to Prince Uttara as he drove the battle- 190
car :
"Stop thy steeds, O Prince of Matsya ! for too close we
may not go,
Stop thy chariot whence my arrows reach and slay the
distant foe,
Seek we out the Kuru monarch, proud Duryodhan let
us meet,

42 TWENTY-TWO STORY POEMS

If he falls we win the battle, other chieftains will
 retreat.
 There is Drona my preceptor, Drona's warlike son is
 there,
 Kripa and the mighty Bhishma, archer Karna tall and
 fair,
 Them I seek not in this battle, lead, O lead thy chariot
 far,
 Midst the chiefs Duryodhan moves not, moves not in
 the ranks of war,
 But to save the pilfered cattle speeds he onward in his
 fear,
 While these warriors stay and tarry to defend their zoo
 monarch's rear,
 But I leave these car-borne warriors, other work to-day
 is mine,
 Meet Duryodhan in the battle, win thy father's stolen
 kine ! ”
 Matsya's Prince then turned the coursers, left behind
 the war's array,
 Where Duryodhan with the cattle quickly held his
 onward way,
 Kripa marked the course of Arjun, guessed his inmost
 thought aright,
 Thus he spake to brother warriors urging speed and
 instant fight :
 “ Mark ye, chieftains, gallant Arjun wheels his sound-
 ing battle-car,
 'Gainst our Prince the proud Duryodhan seeks to turn
 the tide of war,
 Let us fall upon our foeman and our Prince and leader
 save,
 Few save INDRA, god of battles, conquers Arjun fierce 210
 and brave,

What were Matsya's fattened cattle, many thousands
though they be,
If our monarch sinks in battle like a ship in stormy
sea ! ”
Vain were Kripa's words of wisdom, Arjun drove the
chariot fair,
While his shafts like countless locusts whistled through
the ambient air,
Kuru soldiers struck with panic neither stood and
fought, nor fled,
Gazed upon the distant Arjun, gazed upon their
comrades dead !
Arjun twanged his mighty weapon, blew his far-
resounding shell,
Strangely spake his monkey-standard, Kuru warriors
knew it well,
Sankha's voice, *Gandiva's* accents, and the chariot's
booming sound,
Filled the air like distant thunder, shook the firm and 220
solid ground,
Kuru soldiers fled in terror or they slumbered with the
dead,
And the rescued lowing cattle with their tails uplifted
fled !

(v)

WARRIOR'S GUERDON

Now with joy the king Virata to his royal city came,
Saw the rescued herds of cattle, saw Uttara Prince of
fame,
Marked the great and gallant Arjun, helmet-wearing,
armour-cased,

Knew Yudhishtir and his brothers now as royal
 princes dressed,
 And he greeted good Yudhishtir, truth-beloving brave
 and strong,
 And to valiant Arjun offered Matsya's Princess fair
 and young !
 " Pardon, monarch," answered Arjun, " but I may not
 take as bride,
 Matsya's young and beauteous Princess whom I love 23
 with father's pride,
 She hath often met me trusting in the inner palace
 hall,
 As a daughter on a father waited on my loving
 call !
 I have trained her *kōkil* accents, taught her maiden
 steps in dance,
 Watched her skill and varied graces all her native
 charms enhance,
 Pure is she in thought and action, spotless as my hero
 boy,
 Grant her to my son, O monarch, as his wedded wife 240
 and joy !
 Abhimanyu trained in battle, handsome youth of god-
 like face,
 Krishna's sister, fair Subhadra, bore the child of
 princely grace,
 Worthy of thy youthful daughter, pure in heart and
 undefiled,
 Grant it, sire, my Abhimanyu wed thy young and
 beauteous child ! "

Answered Matsya's noble monarch with a glad and
 grateful heart :
 " Words like these befit thy virtue, nobly hast thou
 done thy part,

Be it as thou sayest, Arjun, unto Pandu's race allied,
Matsya's royal line is honoured, Matsya's king is
gratified ! ”

Maha-Bharata

Translated by ROMESH CHUNDER DUTT

III

HIAWATHA'S FASTING

YOU shall hear how Hiawatha
 Prayed and fasted in the forest,
 Not for greater skill in hunting,
 Not for greater craft in fishing,
 Nor for triumphs in the battle,
 And renown among the warriors,
 But for profit of the people,
 For advantage of the nations.

First he built a lodge for fasting,
 Built a wigwam in the forest,
 By the shining Big-Sea-Water,
 In the blithe and pleasant Spring-time,
 In the Moon of Leaves he built it.
 And with dreams and visions many,
 Seven whole days and nights he fasted.

On the first day of his fasting
 Through the leafy woods he wandered ;
 Saw the deer start from the thicket,
 Saw the rabbit in his burrow,
 Heard the pheasant, Bena, drumming,
 Heard the squirrel, Adjidaumo,
 Rattling in his hoard of acorns,
 Saw the pigeon, the Omeme,
 Building nests among the pine-trees,
 And in flocks the wild goose, Wawa,
 Flying to the fenlands northward,
 Whirring, wailing far above him.
 " Master of Life ! " he cried, desponding,

"Must our lives depend on these things?"

On the next day of his fasting 30
By the river's brink he wandered,
Through the Muskoday, the meadow,
Saw the wild-rice, Mahnomonee,
Saw the blueberry, Meenahga,
And the strawberry, Odahmin,
And the gooseberry, Shahbomin,
And the grape-vine, the Bemahgut,
Trailing o'er the elder-branches,
Filling all the air with fragrance!

"Master of Life!" he cried, desponding, 40
"Must our lives depend on these things?"

On the third day of his fasting
By the lake he sat and pondered,
By the still, transparent water,
Saw the sturgeon, Nahma, leaping,
Scattering drops like beads of wampum,
Saw the yellow perch, the Sahwa,
Like a sunbeam in the water,
Saw the pike, the Maskenozha,
And the herring, Okahahwis, 50
And the Shawgashee, the craw-fish!

"Master of Life!" he cried, desponding,
"Must our lives depend on these things?"

On the fourth day of his fasting
In his lodge he lay exhausted;
From his couch of leaves and branches
Gazing with half-open eyelids,
Full of shadowy dreams and visions,
On the dizzy, swimming landscape,
On the gleaming of the water, 60
On the splendour of the sunset.

And he saw a youth approaching,

Dressed in garments green and yellow,
Coming through the purple twilight,
Through the splendour of the sunset ;
Plumes of green bent o'er his forehead,
And his hair was soft and golden.

Standing at the open doorway,
Long he looked at Hiawatha,
Looked with pity and compassion
On his wasted form and features,
And, in accents like the sighing
Of the South-Wind in the tree-tops,
Said he, " O my Hiawatha !
All your prayers are heard in heaven,
For you pray not like the others,
Not for greater skill in hunting,
Not for greater craft in fishing,
Not for triumph in the battle,
Nor renown among the warriors,
But for profit of the people,
For advantage of the nations.

" From the Master of Life descending,
I, the friend of man, Mondamin,
Come to warn you and instruct you,
How by struggle and by labour
You shall gain what you have prayed for.
Rise up from your bed of branches,
Rise, O youth, and wrestle with me ! "

Faint with famine, Hiawatha
Started from his bed of branches,
From the twilight of his wigwam
Forth into the flush of sunset
Came, and wrestled with Mondamin ;
At his touch he felt new courage
Throbbing in his brain and bosom,

Felt new life and hope and vigour
Run through every nerve and fibre.

So they wrestled there together
In the glory of the sunset, 100
And the more they strove and struggled,
Stronger still grew Hiawatha ;
Till the darkness fell around them,
And the heron, the Shuh-shuh-gah,
From her haunts among the fenlands,
Gave a cry of lamentation,
Gave a scream of pain and famine.

" 'Tis enough ! " then said Mondamin,
Smiling upon Hiawatha,
" But to-morrow, when the sun sets, 110
I will come again to try you."
And he vanished, and was seen not ;
Whether sinking as the rain sinks,
Whether rising as the mists rise,
Hiawatha saw not, knew not,
Only saw that he had vanished,
Leaving him alone and fainting,
With the misty lake below him,
And the reeling stars above him.

On the morrow and the next day, 120
When the sun through heaven descending,
Like a red and burning cinder
From the hearth of the Great Spirit,
Fell into the western waters,
Came Mondamin for the trial,
For the strife with Hiawatha ;
Came as silent as the dew comes
From the empty air appearing,
Into empty air returning,
Taking shape when earth it touches, 130

50 TWENTY-TWO STORY POEMS

But invisible to all men
 In its coming and its going.
 Thrice they wrestled there together,
 In the glory of the sunset,
 Till the darkness fell around them,
 Till the heron, the Shuh-shuh-gah,
 From her haunts among the fenlands,
 Uttered her loud cry of famine,
 And Mondamin paused to listen.
 Tall and beautiful he stood there,
 In his garments green and yellow ;
 To and fro his plumes above him
 Waved and nodded with his breathing,
 And the sweat of the encounter
 Stood like drops of dew upon him.
 And he cried, " O Hiawatha !
 Bravely have you wrestled with me,
 Thrice have wrestled stoutly with me,
 And the Master of Life who sees us,
 He will give to you the triumph ! "
 Then he smiled, and said : " To-morrow
 Is the last day of your conflict,
 Is the last day of your fasting.
 You will conquer and o'ercome me ;
 Make a bed for me to lie in,
 Where the rain may fall upon me,
 When the sun may come and warm me :
 Strip these garments, green and yellow,
 Strip this nodding plumage from me,
 Lay me in the earth, and make it
 Soft and loose and light above me.
 " Let no hand disturb my slumber,
 Let no weed nor worm molest me,
 Let not Kahgahgee, the raven,

Come to haunt me and molest me,
Only come yourself to watch me,
Till I wake, and start, and quicken,
Till I leap into the sunshine."

And thus saying, he departed ;
Peacefully slept Hiawatha, 170
But he heard the Wawonaissa,
Heard the whippoorwill complaining,
Perched upon his lonely wigwam ;
Heard the rushing Sebowisha,
Heard the rivulet rippling near him,
Talking to the darksome forest ;
Heard the sighing of the branches,
As they lifted and subsided
At the passing of the night-wind,
Heard them, as one hears in slumber 180
Far-off murmurs, dreamy whispers :
Peacefully slept Hiawatha.

On the morrow came Nokomis,
On the seventh day of his fasting,
Came with food for Hiawatha,
Came imploring and bewailing,
Lest his hunger should o'ercome him,
Lest his fasting should be fatal.

But he tasted not, and touched not,
Only said to her, " Nokomis, 190
Wait until the sun is setting,
Till the darkness falls around us,
Till the heron, the Shuh-shuh-gah,
Crying from the desolate marshes,
Tells us that the day is ended."

Homeward weeping went Nokomis,
Sorrowing for her Hiawatha,
Fearing lest his strength should fail him,

Lest his fasting should be fatal.
He meanwhile sat weary waiting 200
For the coming of Mondamin,
Till the shadows, pointing eastward,
Lengthened over field and forest,
Till the sun dropped from the heaven,
Floating on the waters westward,
As a red leaf in the Autumn
Falls and floats upon the water,
Falls and sinks into its bosom.

And behold ! the young Mondamin,
With his soft and shining tresses, 210
With his garments green and yellow,
With his long and glossy plumage,
Stood and beckoned at the doorway.
And as one in slumber walking,
Pale and haggard, but undaunted,
From the wigwam Hiawatha
Came and wrestled with Mondamin.

Round about him spun the landscape,
Sky and forest reeled together,
And his strong heart leaped within him, 220
As the sturgeon leaps and struggles
In a net to break its meshes.
Like a ring of fire around him
Blazed and flared the red horizon,
And a hundred suns seemed looking
At the combat of the wrestlers.

Suddenly upon the greensward
All alone stood Hiawatha,
Panting with his wild exertion,
Palpitating with the struggle ; 230
And before him, breathless, lifeless,
Lay the youth, with hair dishevelled,

Plumage torn, and garments tattered,
Dead he lay there in the sunset.

And victorious Hiawatha
Made the grave as he commanded,
Stripped the garments from Mondamin,
Stripped his tattered plumage from him,
Laid him in the earth, and made it
Soft and loose and light above him ; 240
And the heron, the Shuh-shuh-gah,
From the melancholy moorlands,
Gave a cry of lamentation,
Gave a cry of pain and anguish !

Homeward then went Hiawatha
To the lodge of old Nokomis,
And the seven days of his fasting
Were accomplished and completed.
But the place was not forgotten
Where he wrestled with Mondamin ; 250
Nor forgotten nor neglected
Was the grave where lay Mondamin,
Sleeping in the rain and sunshine,
Where his scattered plumes and garments
Faded in the rain and sunshine.

Day by day did Hiawatha
Go to wait and watch beside it ;
Kept the dark mould soft above it,
Kept it clean from weeds and insects,
Drove away, with scoffs and shoutings, 260
Kahgahgee, the king of ravens.

Till at length a small green feather
From the earth shot slowly upward,
Then another and another,
And before the Summer ended
Stood the maize in all its beauty,

With its shining robes about it,
And its long, soft, yellow tresses ;
And in rapture Hiawatha
Cried aloud, " It is Mondamin !
Yes, the friend of man, Mondamin ! "
Then he called to old Nokomis
And Iagoo, the great boaster,
Showed them where the maize was growing,
Told them of his wondrous vision,
Of his wrestling and his triumph,
Of this new gift to the nations,
Which should be their food for ever.
And still later, when the Autumn
Changed the long, green leaves to yellow
And the soft and juicy kernels
Grew like wampum hard and yellow,
Then the ripened ears he gathered,
Stripped the withered husks from off them.
As he once had stripped the wrestler,
Gave the first Feast of Mondamin,
And made known unto the people
This new gift of the Great Spirit.

H. W. LONGFELLOW (1807-82)
The Song of Hiawatha

IV

THE CURSE OF THE TREASURE

THERE is a desert of dread in the uttermost part
of the world,
Where over a wall of mountains is a mighty water
hurled,
Whose hidden head none knoweth, nor where it
meeteth the sea ;
And that force is the Force of Andvari, and an Elf of
the Dark is he.
In the cloud and the desert he dwelleth amid that
land alone ;
And his work is the storing of treasure within his
house of stone.
Time was when he knew of wisdom, and had many a
tale to tell
Of the days before the Dwarf-age, and of what in that
world befell :
And he knew of the stars and the sun, and the worlds
that come and go
On the nether rim of heaven, and whence the wind 10
doth blow,
And how the sea hangs balanced betwixt the curving
lands,
And how all drew together for the first Gods'
fashioning hands.
But now is all gone from him, save the craft of gather-
ing gold,
And he heedeth nought of the summer, nor knoweth
the winter cold,

Nor looks to the sun nor the snowfall, nor ever dreams
 of the sea,
 Nor hath heard of the making of men-folk, nor of where
 the high Gods be ;
 But ever he gripeth and gathereth, and he toileth hour
 by hour,
 Nor knoweth the noon from the midnight as he looks
 on his stony bower,
 And saith : ' It is short, it is narrow, for all I shall
 gather and get ;
 For the world is but newly fashioned, and long shall its 20
 years be yet.'

" There Loki fareth, and seeth in a land of nothing
 good,
 Far off o'er the empty desert, the reek of the falling
 flood
 Go up to the floor of heaven, and thither turn his feet
 As he weaveth the unseen meshes and the snare of
 strong deceit ;
 So he cometh his ways to the water, where the glittering
 foam-bow glows,
 And the huge flood leaps the rock-wall and a green
 arch over it throws.
 There under the roof of water he treads the quivering
 floor,
 And the hush of the desert is felt amid the water's roar,
 And the bleak sun lighteth the wave-vault, and tells of
 the fruitless plain,
 And the showers that nourish nothing, and the summer 30
 come in vain.

" There did the great Guile-master his toils and his
 tangles set,

And as wide as was the water, so wide was woven the
 net ;
 And as dim as the Elf's remembrance did the meshes
 of it show ;
 And he had no thought of sorrow, nor spared to come
 and go
 On his errands of griping and getting till he felt himself
 tangled and caught :
 Then back to his blinded soul was his ancient wisdom
 brought,
 And he saw his fall and his ruin, as a man by the light-
 ning's flame
 Sees the garth all flooded by foemen ; and again he
 remembered his name ;
 And e'en as a book well written the tale of the Gods he
 knew,
 And the tale of the making of men, and much of the 40
 deeds they should do.

" But Loki took his man-shape, and laughed aloud and
 cried :

' What fish of the ends of the earth is so strong and so
 feeble-eyed,

That he draweth the pouch of my net on his road to the
 dwelling of Hell ?

What Elf that hath heard the gold growing, but hath
 heard not the light winds tell

That the Gods with the world have been dealing and
 have fashioned men for the earth ?

Where is he that hath ridden the cloud-horse and
 measured the ocean's girth,

But seen nought of the building of God-home nor the
 forging of the sword :

58 TWENTY-TWO STORY POEMS

Where then is he maker of nothing, the earless and
eyeless lord ?

“ ‘ In the pouch of my net he lieth, with his head on the
threshold of Hell ! ’

Then the Elf lamented, and said : ‘ Thou knowst of
my name full well :

Andvari begotten of Oinn, whom the Dwarf-kind called
the Wise,

By the worst of the Gods is taken, the forge and the
father of lies.’

“ Said Loki : ‘ How of the Elf-kind, do they love their
latter life,

When their weal is all departed, and they lie alow in the
strife ? ’

“ Then Andvari groaned and answered : ‘ I know what
thou wouldst have,

The wealth mine own hands gathered, the gold that no
man gave.’

“ ‘ Come forth,’ said Loki, ‘ and give it, and dwell in
peace henceforth—

Or die in the toils if thou listest, if thy life be nothing
worth.’

“ Full sore the Elf lamented, but he came before the God,
And the twain went into the rock-house and on fine gold 60
they trod,

And the walls shone bright, and brighter than the sun
of the upper air.

How great was that treasure of treasures : and the Helm
of Dread was there ;

The world but in dreams had seen it ; and there was the
 hauberk of gold ;
 None other is in the heavens, nor has earth of its fellow
 told.

“ Then Loki bade the Elf-king bring all to the upper
 day,
 And he dight himself with his Godhead to bear the
 treasure away :
 So there in the dim grey desert before the God of
 Guile,
 Great heaps of the hid-world’s treasure the weary Elf
 must pile,
 And Loki looked on laughing : but, when it all was
 done,
 And the Elf was hurrying homeward, his finger gleamed 70
 in the sun :
 Then Loki cried : ‘ Thou art guileful : thou hast not
 learned the tale
 Of the wisdom that Gods hath gotten and their might of
 all avail.
 Hither to me ! that I learn thee of a many things to
 come ;
 Or despite of all wilt thou journey to the dead man’s
 deedless home.
 Come hither again to thy master, and give the ring
 to me ;
 For meseems it is Loki’s portion, and the Bale of Men
 shall it be.’

“ Then the Elf drew off the gold-ring and stood with
 empty hand
 E’en where the flood fell over ’twixt the water and the
 land,

And he gazed on the great Guile-master, and huge and
 grim he grew ;
 And his anguish swelled within him, and the word of 80
 the Norns he knew ;
 How that gold was the seed of gold to the wise and the
 shapers of things,
 The hoarders of hidden treasure, and the unseen glory
 of rings ;
 But the seed of woe to the world and the foolish wasters
 of men,
 And grief to the generations that die and spring again :
 Then he cried : ' There fareest thou Loki, and might I
 load thee worse

Than with what thine ill heart beareth, then shouldst
 thou bear my curse :
 But for men a curse thou bearest : entangled in my
 gold,
 Amid my woe abideth another woe untold.
 Two brethren and a father, eight kings my grief shall
 slay ;
 And the hearts of queens shall be broken, and their 90
 eyes shall loathe the day.
 Lo, how the wilderness blossoms ! Lo, how the lonely
 lands
 Are waving with the harvest that fell from my gather-
 ing hands ! '

" But Loki laughed in silence, and swift in Godhead
 went,
 To the golden hall of Reidmar and the house of our
 content.
 But when that world of treasure was laid within our
 hall

'Twas as if the sun were minded to live 'twixt wall
and wall,
And all we stood by and panted. Then Odin spake
and said :

“ ‘ O Kings, O folk of the Dwarf-kind, lo, the ransom
duly paid !
Will ye have this sun of the ocean, and reap the
fruitful field,
And garner up the harvest that earth therefrom shall 100
yield ? ’

“ So he spake ; but a little season nought answered
Reidmar the wise,
But turned his face from the Treasure, and peered
with eager eyes
Endlong the hall and athwart it, as a man may chase about
A ray of the sun of the morning that a naked sword
throws out ;
And lo from Loki's right-hand came the flash of the
fruitful ring,
And at last spake Reidmar scowling : ‘ Ye wait for my
yea-saying
That your feet may go free on the earth, and the fear
of my toils may be done ;
That then ye may say in your laughter : The fools of
the time agone !
The purblind eyes of the Dwarf-kind ! they have
gotten the garnered sheaf
And have let their Masters depart with the Seed of 110
Gold and of Grief :
O Loki, friend of Allfather, cast down Andvari's ring,
Or the world shall yet turn backward and the high
heavens lack a king.’

“ Then Loki drew off the Elf-ring and cast it down on
the heap,

And forth as the gold met gold did the light of its
glory leap :

But he spake : ‘ It rejoiceth my heart that no whit of
all ye shall lack,

Lest the curse of the Elf-king cleave not, and ye
’scape the utter wrack.’

“ Then laughed and answered Reidmar : ‘ I shall have
it while I live,

And that shall be long, meseemeth : for who is there
may strive

With my sword, the war-wise Fafnir, and my shield
that is Regin the Smith ?

But if indeed I should die, then let men-folk deal
therewith,

And ride to the golden glitter through evil deeds and
good.

I will have my heart’s desire, and do as the high
Gods would.’

“ Then I loosed the Gods from their shackles, and
great they grew on the floor,

And into the night they gat them ; but Odin turned
by the door,

And we looked not, little we heeded, for we grudged
his mastery ;

Then he spake, and his voice was waxen as the voice
of the winter sea :

“ ‘ O Kings, O folk of the Dwarfs, why then will ye
covet and rue ?

I have seen your fathers’ fathers and the dust where-
from they grew ;

But who hath heard of my father or the land where
 first I sprung ?
 Who knoweth my day of repentance, or the year when 130
 I was young ?
 Who hath learned the names of the Wise-one or mea-
 sured out his will ?
 Who hath gone before to teach him, and the doom of
 days fulfill ?
 Lo, I look on the Curse of the Gold, and wrong
 amended by wrong,
 And love by love confounded, and the strong abased
 by the strong ;
 And I order it all and amend it, and the deeds that
 are done I see,
 And none other beholdeth or knoweth ; and who shall
 be wise unto me ?
 For myself to myself I offered, that all wisdom I
 might know,
 And fruitful I waxed of works, and good and fair did
 they grow ;
 And I knew, and I wrought and fore-ordered ; and
 evil sat by my side,
 And myself by myself hath been doomed, and I look 140
 for the fateful tide ;
 And I deal with the generations, and the men mine
 hand hath made,
 And myself by myself shall be grieved, lest the world
 and its fashioning fade.'

" They went and the Gold abided : but the words
 Allfather spake,
 I call them back full often for that golden even's sake,
 Yet little that hour I heard them, save as wind across
 the lea ;

For the gold shone up on Reidmar and 'on Fafnir's
face and on me.

And sore I loved that treasure : so I wrapped my heart
in guile,

And sleeked my tongue with sweetness, and set my
face in a smile,

And I bade my father keep it, the more part of the
gold,

Yet give good store to Fafnir for his goodly help and ¹⁵⁰
bold,

And deal me a little handful for my smithying-help
that day.

But no little I desired, though for little I might pray ;
And prayed I for much or for little, he answered me
no more

Than the shepherd answers the wood-wolf who howls
at the yule-tide door :

But good he ever deemed it to sit on his ivory throne,
And stare on the red rings' glory, and deem he was
ever alone :

And never a word spake Fafnir, but his eyes waxed
red and grim

As he looked upon our father, and noted the ways of
him.

“ The night waned into the morning, and still above
the Hoard

Sat Reidmar clad in purple ; but Fafnir took his sword, ¹⁶⁰
And I took my smithying-hammer, and apart in the
world we went ;

But I came aback in the even, and my heart was
heavy and spent ;

And I longed, but fear was upon me and I durst not go
to the Gold ;

So I lay in the house of my toil mid the things I had
 fashioned of old ;
 And methought as I lay in my bed 'twixt waking and
 slumber of night
 That I heard the tinkling metal and beheld the hall
 alight,
 But I slept and dreamed of the Gods, and the things
 that never have slept,
 Till I woke to a cry and a clashing and forth from the
 bed I leapt,
 And there by the heaped-up Elf-gold my brother
 Fafnir stood.
 And there at his feet lay Reidmar and reddened the 170
 Treasure with blood ;
 And e'en as I looked on his eyes they glazed and
 whitened with death,
 And forth on the torch-litten hall he shed his latest
 breath.

" But I looked on Fafnir and trembled for he wore
 the Helm of Dread,
 And his sword was bare in his hand, and the sword
 and the hand were red
 With the blood of our father Reidmar, and his body
 was wrapped in gold,
 With the ruddy-gleaming mailcoat of whose fellow
 hath nought been told,
 And it seemed as I looked upon him that he grew
 beneath mine eyes :
 And then in the mid-hall's silence did his dreadful
 voice arise :

" " I have slain my father Reidmar, that I alone might
 keep

66 TWENTY-TWO STORY POEMS

The Gold of the darksome places, the Candle of the 180
Deep.

I am such as the Gods have made me, lest the Dwarf-
kind people the earth,
Or mingle their ancient wisdom with its short-lived
latest birth.

I shall dwell alone henceforward, and the Gold and
its waxing curse,
I shall brood on them both together, let my life
grow better or worse.

And I am a King henceforward and long shall be my
life,

And the Gold shall grow with my longing, for I shall
hide it from strife.

And hoard up the Ring of Andvari in the house thine
hand hath built.

O thou, wilt thou tarry and tarry, till I cast thy blood
on the guilt?

Lo, I am a King for ever, and alone on the Gold shall
I dwell

And do no deed to repent of and leave no tale to tell.' 190

"More awful grew his visage as he spake the word
of dread,

And no more durst I behold him, but with heart a-cold-
I fled;

I fled from the glorious house my hands had made so
fair,

As poor as the new-born baby with nought of raiment
or gear:

I fled from the heaps of gold, and my goods were the
eager will,

And the heart that remembereth all, and the hand that
may never be still.

"Then unto this land I came, and that was long
 ago
 As men-folk count the years ; and I taught them to
 reap and to sow,
 And a famous man I became : but that generation
 died,
 And they said that Frey had taught them, and a God 200
 my name did hide.
 Then I taught them the craft of metals, and the sailing
 of the sea,
 And the taming of the horse-kind, and the yoke-beasts'
 husbandry,
 And the building up of houses ; and that race of men
 went by,
 And they said that Thor had taught them ; and a
 smithyng-carle was I.
 Then I gave their maidens the needle and I bade them
 hold the rock,
 And the shuttle-race gaped for them as they sat at
 the weaving-stock.
 But by then these were waxen crones to sit dim-eyed
 by the door,
 It was Freyia had come among them to teach the
 weaving-lore.
 Then I taught them the tales of old, and fair songs
 fashioned and true,
 And their speech grew into music of measured time 210
 and due,
 And they smote the harp to my bidding, and the land
 grew soft and sweet :
 But ere the grass of their grave-mounds rose up above
 my feet,
 It was Bragi had made them sweet-mouthed, and I
 was the wandering scald ;

Yet green did my cunning flourish by whatso name I
 was called,
 And I grew the master of masters—Think thou how
 strange it is
 That the sword in the hands of a stripling shall one
 day end all this !

“ Yet oft mid all my wisdom did I long for my
 brother's part,
 And Fafnir's mighty kingship weighed heavy on my
 heart
 When the Kings of the earthly kingdoms would give
 me golden gifts
 From out of their scanty treasures, due pay for my ²²⁰
 cunning shifts.
 And once—didst thou number the years thou wouldst
 think it long ago—
 I wandered away to the country from whence our
 stem did grow.
 There methought the fells grown greater, but waste
 did the meadows lie,
 And the house was rent and ragged and open to the
 sky.
 But lo, when I came to the doorway, great silence
 brooded there,
 Nor bat nor owl would haunt it, nor the wood-wolves
 draw anear.
 Then I went to the pillared hall-stead, and lo, huge
 heaps of gold,
 And to and fro amidst them a mighty Serpent rolled :
 Then my heart grew chill with terror, for I thought on
 the wont of our race,
 And I, who had lost their cunning, was a man in a ²³⁰
 deadly place,

A feeble man and a swordless in the lone destroyer's
fold ;
For I knew that the Worm was Fafnir, the Wallower
on the Gold.

" So I gathered my strength and fled, and hid my
shame again
Mid the foolish sons of men-folk ; and the more my
hope was vain,
The more I longed for the Treasure, and deliv'rance
from the yoke :
And yet passed the generations, and I dwelt with the
short-lived folk."

WILLIAM MORRIS (1834-96)
*The Story of Sigurd the Volsung and the
Fall of the Niblungs, Book II*

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

AND the first grey of morning fill'd the east,
 And the fog rose out of the Oxus stream.
 But all the Tartar camp along the stream
 Was hush'd, and still the men were plunged in sleep :
 Sohrab alone, he slept not : all night long
 He had lain wakeful, tossing on his bed ;
 But when the grey dawn stole into his tent,
 He rose, and clad himself, and girt his sword,
 And took his horseman's cloak, and left his tent,
 And went abroad into the cold wet fog,
 Through the dim camp to Peran-Wisa's tent.

Through the black Tartar tents he pass'd, which
 stood
 Clustering like bee-hives on the low flat strand
 Of Oxus, where the summer floods o'erflow
 When the sun melts the snows in high Pamere :
 Through the black tents he pass'd, o'er that low strand,
 And to a hillock came, a little back
 From the stream's brink, the spot where first a boat,
 Crossing the stream in summer, scrapes the land.
 The men of former times had crown'd the top
 With a clay fort : but that was fall'n ; and now
 The Tartars built there Peran-Wisa's tent,
 A dome of laths, and o'er it felts were spread.
 And Sohrab came there, and went in, and stood
 Upon the thick-pil'd carpets in the tent,
 And found the old man sleeping on his bed
 Of rugs and felts, and near him lay his arms.

And Peran-Wisa heard him, though the step
Was dull'd ; for he slept light, an old man's sleep ;
And he rose quickly on one arm, and said : 30

“ Who art thou ? for it is not yet clear dawn.
Speak ! is there news, or any night alarm ? ”

But Sohrab came to the bedside, and said :

“ Thou know'st me, Peran-Wisa : it is I.

The sun is not yet risen, and the foe
Sleep ; but I sleep not ; all night long I lie
Tossing and wakeful, and I come to thee.

For so did King Afrasiab bid me seek

Thy counsel, and to heed thee as thy son,

In Samarcand, before the army march'd ; 40

And I will tell thee what my heart desires.

Thou knowest if, since from Ader-baijan first

I came among the Tartars, and bore arms,

I have still serv'd Afrasiab well, and shown,

At my boy's years, the courage of a man.

This too thou know'st, that, while I still bear on

The conquering Tartar ensigns through the world,

And beat the Persians back on every field,

I seek one man, one man, and one alone.

Rustum, my father ; who, I hop'd, should greet, 50

Should one day greet, upon some well-fought field

His not unworthy, not inglorious son.

So I long hop'd, but him I never find.

Come then, hear now, and grant me what I ask.

Let the two armies rest to-day : but I

Will challenge forth the bravest Persian lords

To meet me, man to man : if I prevail,

Rustum will surely hear it ; if I fall—

Old man, the dead need no one, claim no kin.

Dim is the rumour of a common fight, 60

Where host meets host, and many names are sunk ;

But of a single combat Fame speaks clear."

He spoke : and Peran-Wisa took the hand
Of the young man in his, and sigh'd, and said :

" O Sohrab, an unquiet heart is thine !

Canst thou not rest among the Tartar chiefs,

And share the battle's common chance with us

Who love thee, but must press for ever first,

In single fight incurring single risk,

To find a father thou hast never seen ?

Or, if indeed this one desire rules all,

To seek out Rustum—seek him not through fight :

Seek him in peace, and carry to his arms,

O Sohrab, carry an unwounded son !

But far hence seek him, for he is not here.

For now it is not as when I was young,

When Rustum was in front of every fray :

But now he keeps apart, and sits at home,

In Seistan, with Zal, his father old.

Whether that his own mighty strength at last

Feels the abhorr'd approaches of old age ;

Or in some quarrel with the Persian King.

There go :—Thou wilt not ? Yet my heart forebodes

Danger or death awaits thee on this field.

Fain would I know thee safe and well, though lost

To us : fain therefore send thee hence, in peace

To seek thy father, not seek single fights

In vain :—but who can keep the lion's cub

From ravening ? and who govern Rustum's son ?

Go : I will grant thee what thy heart desires."

So said he, and dropp'd Sohrab's hand, and left

His bed, and the warm rugs whereon he lay,

And o'er his chilly limbs his woollen coat

He pass'd, and tied his sandals on his feet,

And threw a white cloak round him, and he took

In his right hand a ruler's staff, no sword ;
And on his head he plac'd his sheep-skin cap,
Black, glossy, curl'd, the fleece of Kara-Kul ;
And rais'd the curtain of his tent, and call'd
His herald to his side, and went abroad. 100

The sun, by this, had risen, and clear'd the fog
From the broad Oxus and the glittering sands :
And from their tents the Tartar horsemen fil'd
Into the open plain ; so Haman bade ;
Haman, who next to Peran-Wisa rul'd
The host, and still was in his lusty prime.
From their black tents, long files of horse, they stream'd :
As when, some grey November morn, the files,
In marching order spread, of long-neck'd cranes,
Stream over Casbin, and the southern slopes 110
Of Elburz, from the Aralian estuaries,
Or some froze Caspian reed-bed, southward bound
For the warm Persian sea-board : so they stream'd.
The Tartars of the Oxus, the King's guard,
First with black sheep-skin caps and with long spears ;
Large men, large steeds ; who from Bokhara come
And Khiva, and ferment the milk of mares.
Next the more temperate Toorkmuns of the south,
The Tukas, and the lances of Salore,
And those from Attruck and the Caspian sands ; 120
Light men, and on light steeds, who only drink
The acrid milk of camels, and their wells.
And then a swarm of wandering horse, who came
From far, and a more doubtful service own'd ;
The Tartars of Ferghana, from the banks
Of the Jaxartes, men with scanty beards
And close-set skull-caps ; and those wilder hordes
Who roam o'er Kipchak and the northern waste.
Kalmuks and unkemp'd Kuzzaks, tribes who stray

Nearest the Pole, and wandering Kirghizzes,
 Who come on shaggy ponies from Pamere.
 These all fil'd out from camp into the plain.
 And on the other side the Persians form'd :
 First a light cloud of horse, Tartars they seem'd,
 The Ilyats of Khorassan : and behind,
 The royal troops of Persia, horse and foot,
 Marshall'd battalions bright in burnish'd steel.
 But Peran-Wisa with his herald came
 Threading the Tartar squadrons to the front,
 And with his staff kept back the foremost ranks.
 And when Ferood, who led the Persians, saw
 That Peran-Wisa kept the Tartars back,
 He took his spear, and to the front he came,
 And check'd his ranks, and fix'd them where they stood.
 And the old Tartar came upon the sand
 Betwixt the silent hosts, and spake, and said :—
 " Ferood, and ye, Persians and Tartars, hear !
 Let there be truce between the hosts to-day.
 But choose a champion from the Persian lords
 To fight our champion Sohrab, man to man."
 As, in the country, on a morn in June,
 When the dew glistens on the pearled ears,
 A shiver runs through the deep corn for joy—
 So, when they heard what Peran-Wisa said,
 A thrill through all the Tartar squadrons ran
 Of pride and hope for Sohrab, whom they lov'd.
 But as a troop of pedlars, from Cabool,
 Cross underneath the Indian Caucasus,
 That vast sky-neighbouring mountain of milk snow ;
 Winding so high, that, as they mount, they pass
 Long flocks of travelling birds dead on the snow,
 Chok'd by the air, and scarce can they themselves
 Slake their parch'd throats with sugar'd mulberries—

In single file they move, and stop their breath,
For fear they should dislodge the o'erhanging snows—
So the pale Persians held their breath with fear.

And to Ferood his brother Chiefs came up
To counsel : Gudurz and Zoarrah came,
And Feraburz, who rul'd the Persian host
Second, and was the uncle of the King :
These came and counsell'd ; and then Gudurz said :

170

“ Ferood, shame bids us take their challenge up,
Yet champion have we none to match this youth.
He has the wild stag's foot, the lion's heart.
But Rustum came last night ; aloof he sits
And sullen, and has pitch'd his tents apart :
Him will I seek, and carry to his ear
The Tartar challenge, and this young man's name.
Haply he will forget his wrath, and fight.
Stand forth the while, and take their challenge up.”

180

So spake he ; and Ferood stood forth and said :
“ Old man, be it agreed as thou hast said.
Let Sohrab arm, and we will find a man.”

He spoke ; and Peran-Wisa turn'd, and strode
Back through the opening squadrons to his tent.
But through the anxious Persians Gudurz ran,
And cross'd the camp which lay behind, and reach'd,
Out on the sands beyond it, Rustum's tents.
Of scarlet cloth they were, and glittering gay,
Just pitch'd : the high pavilion in the midst
Was Rustum's, and his men lay camp'd around.
And Gudurz enter'd Rustum's tent, and found
Rustum : his morning meal was done, but still
The table stood beside him, charg'd with food ;
A side of roasted sheep, and cakes of bread,
And dark green melons ; and there Rustum sate
Listless, and held a falcon on his wrist,

190

And he has none to guard his weak old age.
There would I go, and hang my armour up,
And with my great name fence that weak old man,
And spend the goodly treasures I have got,
And rest my age, and hear of Sohrab's fame,
And leave to death the hosts of thankless kings,
And with these slaughterous hands draw sword no more."

He spoke, and smil'd ; and Gudurz made reply :
" What then, O Rustum, will men say to this, 240
When Sohrab dares our bravest forth, and seeks
Thee most of all, and Thou, whom most he seeks,
Hidest thy face ? Take heed, lest men should say
*Like some old miser, Rustum hoards his fame,
And slums to peril it with younger men.*"

And, greatly mov'd, then Rustum made reply :
" O Gudurz, wherefore dost thou say such words ?
Thou knowest better words than this to say.
What is one more, one less, obscure or fam'd,
Valiant or craven, young or old, to me ? 250
Are not they mortal, am not I myself ?
But who for men of nought would do great deeds ?
Come, thou shalt see how Rustum hoards his fame.
But I will fight unknown, and in plain arms ;
Let not men say of Rustum, he was match'd
In single fight with any mortal man."

He spoke, and frown'd ; and Gudurz turned, and ran
Back quickly through the camp in fear and joy,
Fear at his wrath, but joy that Rustum came.
But Rustum strode to his tent door, and call'd 260
His followers in, and bade them bring his arms,
And clad himself in steel : the arms he chose
Were plain, and on his shield was no device,
Only his helm was rich, inlaid with gold,
And from the fluted spine atop a plume

Of horsehair wav'd, a scarlet horsehair plume.
 So arm'd he issued forth ; and Ruksh, his horse,
 Follow'd him, like a faithful hound, at heel,
 Ruksh, whose renown was nois'd through all the earth,
 The horse, whom Rustum on a foray once 270
 Did in Bokhara by the river find

A colt beneath its dam, and drove him home,
 And rear'd him ; a bright bay, with lofty crest ;
 Dight with a saddle-cloth of broider'd green
 Crusted with gold, and on the ground were work'd
 All beasts of chase, all beasts which hunters know :
 So follow'd, Rustum left his tents, and cross'd
 The camp, and to the Persian host appear'd.
 And all the Persians knew him, and with shouts
 Hail'd ; but the Tartars knew not who he was. 28c

And dear as the wet diver to the eyes
 Of his pale wife who waits and weeps on shore,
 By sandy Bahrein, in the Persian Gulf,
 Plunging all day in the blue waves, at night,
 Having made up his tale of precious pearls,
 Rejoins her in their hut upon the sand—
 So dear to the pale Persians Rustum came.

And Rustum to the Persian front advanc'd,
 And Sohrab arm'd in Haman's tent, and came.
 And as afield the reapers cut a swathe 290
 Down through the middle of a rich man's corn,
 And on each side are squares of standing corn,
 And in the midst a stubble, short and bare ;
 So on each side were squares of men, with spears
 Bristling, and in the midst, the open sand.
 And Rustum came upon the sand, and cast
 His eyes towards the Tartar tents, and saw
 Sohrab come forth, and ey'd him as he came.

✓ As some rich woman, on a winter's morn,

Eyes through her silken curtains the poor drudge 300
Who with numb blacken'd fingers makes her fire—
At cock-crow, on a starlit winter's morn,
When the frost flowers the whiten'd window panes—
And wonders how she lives, and what the thoughts
Of that poor drudge may be ; so Rustum ey'd
The unknown adventurous Youth, who from afar
Came seeking Rustum, and defying forth
All the most valiant chiefs : long he perus'd
His spirited air, and wonder'd who he was.
For very young he seem'd, tenderly rear'd ; 310
Like some young cypress, tall, and dark, and straight,
Which in a queen's secluded garden throws
Its slight dark shadow on the moonlit turf,
By midnight, to a bubbling fountain's sound—
So slender Sohrab seem'd, so softly rear'd.
And a deep pity enter'd Rustum's soul
As he beheld him coming ; and he stood,
And beckon'd to him with his hand, and said :
“ O thou young man, the air of Heaven is soft,
And warm, and pleasant ; but the grave is cold. 320
Heaven's air is better than the cold dead grave.
Behold me : I am vast, and clad in iron,
And tried ; and I have stood on many a field
Of blood, and I have fought with many a foe :
Never was that field lost, or that foe sav'd.
O Sohrab, wherefore wilt thou rush on death ?
Be govern'd : quit the Tartar host, and come
To Iran, and be as my son to me,
And fight beneath my banner till I die.
There are no youths in Iran brave as thou.” 330
So he spake, mildly : Sohrab heard his voice,
The mighty voice of Rustum ; and he saw
His giant figure planted on the sand,

Sole, like some single tower, which a chief
 Has builded on the waste in former years
 Against the robbers ; and he saw that head,
 Streak'd with its first grey hairs : hope fill'd his soul ;
 And he ran forwards and embrac'd his knees,
 And clasp'd his hand within his own and said :

“ Oh, by thy father's head ! by thine own soul ! 340
 Art thou not Rustum ? Speak ! art thou not he ? ”

But Rustum ey'd askance the kneeling youth,
 And turn'd away, and spoke to his own soul :

“ Ah me, I muse what this young fox may mean.

False, wily, boastful, are these Tartar boys.

For if I now confess this thing he asks,

And hide it not, but say—*Rustum is here*—

He will not yield indeed, nor quit our foes,

But he will find some pretext not to fight,

And praise my fame, and proffer courteous gifts. 350

A belt or sword perhaps, and go his way.

And on a feast day, in Afrasiab's hall,

In Samarcand, he will arise and cry—

‘ I challeng'd once, when the two armies camp'd

Beside the Oxus, all the Persian lords

To cope with me in single fight ; but they

Shrank ; only Rustum dar'd : then he and I

Chang'd gifts, and went on equal terms away.’

So will he speak, perhaps, while men applaud.

Then were the chiefs of Iran sham'd through me.” 360

And then he turn'd, and sternly spake aloud :

“ Rise ! wherefore dost thou vainly question thus

Of Rustum ? I am here, whom thou hast call'd

By challenge forth : make good thy vaunt, or yield.

Is it with Rustum only thou wouldst fight ?

Rash boy, men look on Rustum's face and flee.

For well I know, that did great Rustum stand

Before thy face this day, and were reveal'd,
There would be then no talk of fighting more.
But being what I am, I tell thee this ;
Do thou record it in thine inmost soul :
Either thou shalt renounce thy vaunt, and yield ;
Or else thy bones shall strew this sand, till winds
Bleach them, or Oxus with his summer floods,
Oxus in summer wash them all away."

370

He spoke : and Sohrab answer'd, on his feet :
✓ " Art thou so fierce ? Thou wilt not fright me so.

✓ I am no girl, to be made pale by words.

Yet this thou hast said well, did Rustum stand
Here on this field, there were no fighting then.

380

But Rustum is far hence, and we stand here.

Begin : thou art more vast, more dread than I,
And thou art prov'd, I know, and I am young—
But yet Success sways with the breath of Heaven.
And though thou thinkest that thou knowest sure
Thy victory, yet thou canst not surely know.

For we are all, like swimmers in the sea,
Pois'd on the top of a huge wave of Fate,
Which hangs uncertain to which side to fall.

And whether it will heave us up to land,

390

Or whether it will roll us out to sea,

Back out to sea, to the deep waves of death,

We know not, and no search will make us know :

Only the event will teach us in its hour."

He spoke ; and Rustum answer'd not, but hurl'd
His spear : down from the shoulder, down it came,
As on some partridge in the corn a hawk
That long has tower'd in the airy clouds
Drops like a plummet : Sohrab saw it come,
And sprang aside, quick as a flash : the spear
Hiss'd, and went quivering down into the sand

400

Which it sent flying wide :—then Sohrab threw
 In turn, and full struck Rustum's shield : sharp rang,
 The iron plates rang sharp, but turn'd the spear.
 And Rustum seiz'd his club, which none but he
 Could wield ; an unlopp'd trunk it was, and huge,
 Still rough ; like those which men in treeless plains
 To build their boats fish from the flooded rivers,
 Hyphasis or Hydaspes, when, high up
 By their dark springs, the wind in winter-time
 Has made in Himalayan forests wrack,
 And strewn the channels with torn boughs ; so huge
 The club which Rustum lifted now, and struck
 One stroke ; but again Sohrab sprang aside
 Lithe as the glancing snake, and the club came
 Thundering to earth, and leapt from Rustum's hand.
 And Rustum follow'd his own blow, and fell
 To his knees, and with his fingers clutch'd the sand :
 And now might Sohrab have unshcath'd his sword,
 And pierc'd the mighty Rustum while he lay
 Dizzy, and on his knees, and chok'd with sand :
 But he look'd on, and smil'd, nor bar'd his sword,
 But courteously drew back, and spoke, and said :

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“ Thou strik'st too hard : that club of thine will float
 Upon the summer floods, and not my bones.
 But rise, and be not wroth ; not wroth am I :
 No, when I see thee, wrath forsakes my soul.
 Thou say'st, thou art not Rustum : be it so.
 Who art thou then, that canst so touch my soul ?
 Boy as I am, I have seen battles too ;
 Have waded foremost in their bloody waves,
 And heard their hollow roar of dying men ;
 But never was my heart thus touch'd before.
 Are they from Heaven, these softening of the heart ?
 O thou old warrior, let us yield to Heaven !

Come, plant we here in earth our angry spears,
And make a truce, and sit upon his sand,
And pledge each other in red wine, like friends,
And thou shalt talk to me of Rustum's deeds.
There are enough foes in the Persian host 440
Whom I may meet, and strike, and feel no pang ;
Champions enough Afrasiab has, whom thou
Mayst fight ; fight them, when they confront thy spear.
But oh, let there be peace 'twixt thee and me ! ”

He ceas'd : but while he spake, Rustum had risen,
And stood erect, trembling with rage : his club
He left to lie, but had regain'd his spear,
Whose fiery point now in his mail'd right-hand
Blaz'd bright and baleful, like that autumn Star,
The baleful sign of fevers : dust had soil'd 450
His stately crest, and dimm'd his glittering arms.
His breast heav'd ; his lips foam'd ; and twice his voice
Was *chok'd with rage : at last these words broke way :*

“ Girl ! nimble with thy feet, not with thy hands !
Curl'd minion, dancer, coiner of sweet words !
Fight ; let me hear thy hateful voice no more !
Thou art not in Afrasiab's gardens now
With Tartar girls, with whom thou art wont to dance ;
But on the Oxus sands, and in the dance
Of battle, and with me, who make no play 460
Of war : I fight it out, and hand to hand.
Speak not to me of truce, and pledge, and wine !
Remember all thy valour : try thy feints
And cunning : all the pity I had is gone :
Because thou hast sham'd me before both the hosts
With thy light skipping tricks, and thy girl's wiles.”

He spoke ; and Sohrab kindled at his taunts,
And he too drew his sword : at once they rush'd
Together, as two eagles on one prey

Come rushing down together from the clouds,
One from the east, one from the west : their shields
Dash'd with a clang together, and a din
Rose, such as that the sinewy woodcutters
Make often in the forest's heart at morn,
Of hewing axes, crashing trees : such blows
Rustum and Sohrab on each other hail'd.
And you would say that sun and stars took part
In that unnatural conflict ; for a cloud
Grew suddenly in Heaven, and dark'd the sun
Over the fighters' heads ; and a wind rose 450
Under their feet, and moaning swept the plain,
And in a sandy whirlwind wrapp'd the pair.
In gloom they twain were wrapp'd, and they alone ;
For both the on-looking hosts on either hand
Stood in broad daylight, and the sky was pure,
And the sun sparkled on the Oxus stream.
But in the gloom they fought, with bloodshot eyes
And labouring breath ; first Rustum struck the shield
Which Sohrab held stiff out : the steel-spik'd spear
Rent the tough plates, but fail'd to reach the skin, 490
And Rustum pluck'd it back with angry groan.
Then Sohrab with his sword smote Rustum's helm,
Nor clove its steel quite through ; but all the crest
He shore away, and that proud horsehair plume,
Never till now defil'd, sunk to the dust ;
And Rustum bow'd his head ; but then the gloom
Grew blacker : thunder rumbled in the air,
And lightnings rent the cloud ; and Ruksh, the horse,
Who stood at hand, utter'd a dreadful cry :
No horse's cry was that, most like the roar 500
Of some pain'd desert lion, who all day
Has trail'd the hunter's javelin in his side,
And comes at night to die upon the sand :

The two hosts heard that cry, and quak'd for fear,
And Oxus curdled as it cross'd his stream.
But Sohrab heard, and quail'd not, but rush'd on,
And struck again ; and again Rustum bow'd
His head ; but this time all the blade, like glass,
Sprang in a thousand shivers on the helm,
And in his hand the hilt remain'd alone. 510
Then Rustum rais'd his head : his dreadful eyes
Glar'd, and he shook on high his menacing spear,
And shouted, *Rustum !* Sohrab heard that shout,
And shrank amaz'd : back he recoil'd one step,
And scann'd with blinking eyes the advancing Form :
And then he stood bewilder'd ; and he dropp'd
His covering shield, and the spear pierc'd his side.
He reel'd, and staggering back, sunk to the ground.
And then the gloom dispers'd, and the wind fell,
And the bright sun broke forth, and melted all 520
The cloud ; and the two armies saw the pair ;
Saw Rustum standing, safe upon his feet,
And Sohrab, wounded, on the bloody sand.

Then, with a bitter smile, Rustum began :
“ Sohrab, thou thoughtest in thy mind to kill
A Persian lord this day, and strip his corpse,
And bear thy trophies to Afrasiab's tent.
Or else that the great Rustum would come down
Himself to fight, and that thy wiles would move
His heart to take a gift, and let thee go. 530
And then that all the Tartar host would praise
Thy courage or thy craft, and spread thy fame,
To glad thy father in his weak old age.
Fool ! thou art slain, and by an unknown man !
Dearer to the red jackals shalt thou be,
Than to thy friends, and to thy father old.”

And with a fearless mien Sohrab replied :

" Unl nown thou art ; yet thy fierce vaunt is vain.
 Thou dost not slay me, proud and boastful man !
 No ! Rustum slays me, and this filial heart. 550
 For were I match'd with ten such men as thou,
 And I were he who till to-day I was,
 They should be lying here, I standing there.
 But that beloved name unnerv'd my arm—
 'That name, and something, I confess, in thee,
 Which troubles all my heart, and made my shield
 Fall ; and thy spear transfix'd an unarm'd foe.
 And now thou boastest, and insult'st my fate.
 But hear thou this, fierce Man, tremble to hear !
 'The mighty Rustum shall avenge my death ! 555
 My father, whom I seek through all the world,
 He shall avenge my death, and punish thee ! "

As when some hunter in the spring hath found
 A breeding eagle sitting on her nest,
 Upon the craggy isle of a hill lake,
 And pierc'd her with an arrow as she rose,
 And follow'd her to find her where she fell
 Far off ;—anon her mate comes winging back
 From hunting, and a great way off describes
 His huddling young left sole ; at that, he checks 560
 His pinion, and with short uneasy sweeps
 Circles above his cyry, with loud screams
 Chiding his mate back to her nest ; but she
 Lies dying, with the arrow in her side,
 In some far stony gorge out of his ken,
 A heap of fluttering feathers : never more
 Shall the lake glass her, flying over it ;
 Never the black and dripping precipices
 Echo her stormy scream as she sails by :
 As that poor bird flies home, nor knows his loss. 570
 So Rustum knew not his own loss, but stood

Over his dying son, and knew him not.

But with a cold, incredulous voice, he said :

“ What prate is this of fathers and revenge ?
The mighty Rustum never had a son.”

And, with a failing voice, Sohrab replied :

“ Ah yes, he had ! and that lost son am I.

Surely the news will one day reach his ear,
Reach Rustum, where he sits, and tarries long,
Somewhere, I know not where, but far from here ; 580
And pierce him like a stab, and make him leap
To arms, and cry for vengeance upon thee.

Fierce man, bethink thee, for an only son !
What will that grief, what will that vengeance be !
Oh, could I live, till I that grief had seen !

Yet him I pity not so much, but her,
My mother, who in Ader-baijan dwells
With that old King, her father, who grows grey
With age, and rules over the valiant Koords.
Her most I pity, who no more will see 590

Sohrab returning from the Tartar camp,
With spoils and honour, when the war is done.
But a dark rumour will be bruited up,
From tribe to tribe, until it reach her ear ;
And then will that defenceless woman learn
That Sohrab will rejoice her sight no more ;
But that in battle with a nameless foe,
By the far distant Oxus, he is slain.”

He spoke ; and as he ceas'd he wept aloud,
Thinking of her he left, and his own death. 600
He spoke ; but Rustum listen'd, plung'd in thought.
Nor did he yet believe it was his son
Who spoke, although he call'd back names he knew ;
For he had had sure tidings that the babe,
Which was in Ader-baijan born to him,

88 TWENTY-TWO STORY POEMS

Had been a puny girl, no boy at all ;
 So that sad mother sent him word, for fear
 Rustum should take the boy, to train in arms ;
 And so he deem'd that either Sohrab took,
 By a false boast, the style of Rustum's son ;
 Or that men gave it him, to swell his fame.
 So deem'd he ; yet he listen'd, plung'd in thought ;
 And his soul set to grief, as the vast tide
 Of the bright rocking Ocean sets to shore
 At the full moon : tears gathered in his eyes ;
 For he remembered his own early youth,
 And all its bounding rapture ; as, at dawn,
 The Shepherd from his mountain lodge describes
 A far bright City, smitten by the sun,
 Through many rolling clouds ;—so Rustum saw
 His youth ; saw Sohrab's mother, in her bloom ;
 And that old King, her father, who lov'd well
 His wandering guest, and gave him his fair child
 With joy ; and all the pleasant life they led,
 They three, in that long-distant summer-time—
 The castle, and the dewy woods, and hunt
 And hound, and morn on those delightful hills
 In Ader-baijan. And he saw that Youth,
 Of age and looks to be his own dear son,
 Pitcous and lovely, lying on the sand,
 Like some rich hyacinth, which by the scythe
 Of an unskilful gardener has been cut,
 Mowing the garden grass-plots near its bed,
 And lies, a fragrant tower of purple bloom,
 On the mown, dying grass ;—so Sohrab lay,
 Lovely in death, upon the common sand.
 And Rustum gaz'd on him with grief, and said :
 " O Sohrab, thou indeed art such a son
 Whom Rustum, wert thou his, might well have lov'd !

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630

Yet here thou errest, Sohrab, or else men
Have told thee false ;—thou art not Rustum's son.
For Rustum had no son : one child he had—
But one—a girl : who with her mother now
Plies some light female task, nor dreams of us—
Of us she dreams not, nor of wounds, nor war.”

640

But Sohrab answer'd him in wrath ; for now
The anguish of the deep-fix'd spear grew fierce,
And he desired to draw forth the steel,
And let the blood flow free, and so to die ;
But first he would convince his stubborn foe—
And, rising sternly on one arm, he said :

650

“ Man, who art thou who dost deny my words ?
Truth sits upon the lips of dying men,
And Falsehood, while I liv'd, was far from mine.
I tell thee, prick'd upon this arm I bear
That seal which Rustum to my mother gave,
That she might prick it on the babe she bore.”

He spoke : and all the blood left Rustum's cheeks ;
And his knees totter'd, and he smote his hand,
Against his breast, his heavy mailed hand,
That the hard iron corslet clank'd aloud :
And to his heart he press'd the other hand,
And in a hollow voice he spake, and said :

660

“ Sohrab, that were a proof which could not lie.
If thou shew this, then art thou Rustum's son.”

Then, with weak hasty fingers, Sohrab loos'd
His belt, and near the shoulder bar'd his arm,
And shew'd a sign in faint vermilion points
Prick'd : as a cunning workman, in Pekin,
Pricks with vermilion some clear porcelain vase,
An emperor's gift—at early morn he paints,
And all day long, and, when night comes, the lamp
Lights up his studious forehead and thin hands :

670

So delicately prick'd the sign appear'd
On Sohrab's arm, the sign of Rustum's seal.
It was that Griffin, which of old rear'd Zal,
Rustum's great father, whom they left to die,
A helpless babe, among the mountain rocks.
Him that kind Creature found, and rear'd, and lov'd—
Then Rustum took it for his glorious sign.
And Sohrab bar'd that figure on his arm,
And himself scann'd it long with mournful eyes,
And then he touch'd it with his hand and said :

650

"How say'st thou? Is that sign the proper sign
Of Rustum's son, or of some other man's?"

He spoke : but Rustum gaz'd, and gaz'd, and stood
Speechless ; and then he utter'd one sharp cry—
O Boy—thy Father !—and his voice chok'd there.
And then a dark cloud pass'd before his eyes,
And his head swam, and he sunk down to earth.
But Sohrab crawl'd to where he lay, and cast
His arms about his neck, and kiss'd his lips,
And with fond faltering fingers strok'd his cheeks,
Trying to call him back to life : and life
Came back to Rustum, and he op'd his eyes,
And they stood wide with horror ; and he seiz'd
In both his hands the dust which lay around,
And threw it on his head, and smirch'd his hair,
His hair, and face, and beard, and glittering arms :
And strong convulsive groanings shook his breast,
And his sobs chok'd him ; and he clutch'd his sword,
To draw it, and for ever let life out.

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But Sohrab saw his thought, and held his hands,
And with a soothing voice he spoke, and said :

"Father, forbear : for I but meet to-day
The doom that at my birth was written down
In Heaven, and thou art Heaven's unconscious hand.

Surely my heart cried out that it was thou,
When first I saw thee ; and thy heart spoke too,
I know it : but Fate trod those promptings down 710
Under its iron heel ; Fate, Fate engag'd
The strife, and hurl'd me on my father's spear.
But let us speak no more of this : I find
My father ; let me feel that I have found.
Come, sit beside me on this sand, and take
My head betwixt thy hands, and kiss my cheeks,
And wash them with thy tears, and say, ' My Son ! '
Quick ! quick ! for number'd are my sands of life,
And swift ; for like the lightning to this field
I came, and like the wind I go away— 720
Sudden, and swift, and like a passing wind.
But it was writ in Heaven that this should be."

So said he : and his voice releas'd the heart
Of Rustum, and his tears broke forth ; he cast
His arms round his son's neck, and wept aloud,
And kiss'd him. And awe fell on both the hosts
When they saw Rustum's grief : and Ruksh, the horse,
With his head bowing to the ground, and mane
Sweeping the dust, came near, and in mute woe
First to the one then to the other mov'd 730
His head, as if enquiring what their grief
Might mean ; and from his dark, compassionate eyes,
The big warm tears roll'd down, and cak'd the sand.
But Rustum chid him with stern voice, and said :

" Ruksh, now thou grievest ; but, O Ruksh, thy feet
Should then have rotted on thy nimble joints,
When first they bore thy Master to this field."

But Sohrab look'd upon the horse and said :
" Is this then Ruksh ? How often, in past days,
My mother told me of thee, thou brave Steed ! 740
My terrible father's terrible horse ; and said,

'That I should one day find thy lord and thee.
 Come, let me lay my hand upon thy mane.
 O Ruksh, thou art more fortunate than I ;
 For thou hast gone where I shall never go,
 And snuff'd the breezes of my father's home.
 And thou hast trod the sands of Seistan,
 And seen the River of Helmund, and the Lake
 Of Zirrah ; and the aged Zal himself
 Has often strok'd thy neck, and given thee food, 750
 Corn in a golden platter soak'd with wine,
 And said—' O Ruksh ! bear Rustum well ! '—but I
 Have never known my grandsire's furrow'd face,
 Nor seen his lofty house in Seistan,
 Nor slak'd my thirst at the clear Helmund stream :
 But lodg'd among my father's foes, and seen
 Afrasiab's cities only, Samarcand,
 Bokhara, and lone Khiva in the waste,
 And the black Toorkmun tents ; and only drunk
 The desert rivers, Moorghab and Tejend, 760
 Kohik, and where the Kalmuks feed their sheep,
 The northern Sir ; and this great Oxus stream—
 The yellow Oxus, by whose brink I die."

And, with a heavy groan, Rustum replied :

" Oh that its waves were flowing over me !
 Oh that I saw its grains of yellow silt
 Roll tumbling in the current o'er my head ! "

And, with a grave mild voice, Sohrab replied :

" Desire not that, my father ; thou must live.
 For some are born to do great deeds, and live, 770
 As some are born to be obscur'd, and die.
 Do thou the deeds I die too young to do,
 And reap a second glory in thine age.
 Thou art my father, and thy gain is mine.
 But come : thou seest this great host of men

Which follow me ; I pray thee, slay not these :
Let me entreat for them : what have they done ?
They follow'd me, my hope, my fame, my star.
Let them all cross the Oxus back in peace.
But me thou must bear hence, not send with them, 780
But carry me with thee to Seistan,
And place me on a bed, and mourn for me,
Thou, and the snow-hair'd Zal, and all thy friends.
And thou must lay me in that lovely earth,
And heap a stately mound above my bones,
And plant a far-seen pillar over all :
That so the passing horseman on the waste
May see my tomb a great way off, and say—
Sohrab, the mighty Rustum's son, lies there,
Whom his great father did in ignorance kill— 790
And I be not forgotten in my grave."

And, with a mournful voice, Rustum replied :
" Fear not ; as thou hast said, Sohrab, my son,
So shall it be ; for I will burn my tents,
And quit the host, and bear thee hence with me,
And carry thee away to Seistan,
And place thee on a bed, and mourn for thee,
With the snow-headed Zal, and all my friends.
And I will lay thee in that lovely earth,
And heap a stately mound above thy bones, 800
And plant a far-seen pillar over all :
And men shall not forget thee in thy grave.
And I will spare thy host : yea, let them go :
Let them all cross the Oxus back in peace.
What should I do with slaying any more ?
For would that all whom I have ever slain
Might be once more alive ; my bitterest foes,
And they who were call'd champions in their time,
And through whose death I won that fame I have ;

And I were nothing but a common man,
A poor, mean soldier, and without renown ;
So thou mightest live too, my Son, my Son !
Or rather would that I, even I myself,
Might now be lying on this bloody sand,
Near death, and by an ignorant stroke of thine,
Not thou of mine ; and I might die, not thou ;
And I, not thou, be borne to Seistan ;
And Zal might weep above my grave, not thine ;
And say—*O son, I weep thee not too sore,
For willingly, I know, thou met'st thine end.*—
But now in blood and battles was my youth,
And full of blood and battles is my age ;
And I shall never end this life of blood.”

810

820

Then, at the point of death, Sohrab replied :
“ A life of blood indeed, thou dreadful Man !
But thou shalt yet have peace ; only not now ;
Not yet : but thou shalt have it on that day,
When thou shalt sail in a high-masted Ship,
Thou and the other peers of Kai-Khosroo,
Returning home over the salt blue sea,
From laying thy dear Master in his grave.”

830

And Rustum gaz'd on Sohrab's face, and said :
“ Soon be that day, my Son, and deep that sea !
Till then, if Fate so wills, let me endure.”

He spoke ; and Sohrab smil'd on him, and took
The spear, and drew it from his side, and eas'd
His wound's imperious anguish : but the blood
Came welling from the open gash, and life
Flow'd with the stream : all down his cold white side
The crimson torrent pour'd, dim now, and soil'd,
Like the soil'd tissue of white violets
Left, freshly gather'd, on their native bank,
By romping children, whom their nurses call

840

From the hot fields at noon : his head droop'd low,
His limbs grew slack ; motionless, white, he lay—
White, with eyes clos'd ; only when heavy gasps,
Deep, heavy gasps, quivering through all his frame,
Convuls'd him back to life, he open'd them,
And fix'd them feebly on his father's face :
'Till now all strength was ebb'd, and from his limbs
Unwillingly the spirit fled away,
Regretting the warm mansion which it left,
And youth and bloom, and this delightful world.

850

So, on the bloody sand, Sohrab lay dead.
And the great Rustum drew his horseman's cloak
Down o'er his face, and sate by his dead son.
As those black granite pillars, once high-rear'd
By Jemshid in Persepolis, to bear
His house, now, mid their broken flights of steps,
Lie prone, enormous, down the mountain side—
So in the sand lay Rustum by his son.

860

And night came down over the solemn waste,
And the two gazing hosts, and that sole pair,
And darken'd all ; and a cold fog, with night,
Crept from the Oxus. Soon a hum arose,
As of a great assembly loos'd, and fires
Began to twinkle through the fog : for now
Both armies mov'd to camp, and took their meal :
The Persians took it on the open sands
Southward ; the Tartars by the river marge :
And Rustum and his son were left alone.

870

But the majestic River floated on,
Out of the mist and hum of that low land,
Into the frosty starlight, and there mov'd,
Rejoicing, through the hush'd Chorasman waste,
Under the solitary moon : he flow'd
Right for the Polar Star, past Orgunjè,

Brimming, and bright, and large : then sands begin
To hem his watery march, and dam his streams,
And split his currents ; that for many a league
The shorn and parcell'd Oxus strains along
Through beds of sand and matted rushy isles—
Oxus, forgetting the bright speed he had
In his high mountain cradle in Pamere,
A foil'd circuitous wanderer :—till at last
The long'd-for dash of waves is heard, and wide
His luminous home of waters opens, bright
And tranquil, from whose floor the new-bath'd stars
Emerge, and shine upon the Aral Sea.

MATTHEW ARNOLD (1822-88)

VI

THE SLAYING OF THE DRAGON

WITH that they heard a roaring hideous sound,
 That all the ayre with terrour filled wide,
 And seemd uneath to shake the stedfast ground.
 Eftsoones that dreadfull Dragon they espide,
 Where stretcht he lay upon the sunny side
 Of a great hill, himselfe like a great hill.
 But all so soone, as he from far descride
 Those glistring armes, that heaven with light did fill,
 He rousd himselfe full blith, and hastned them untill.

Then bad the knight his Lady yede aloofe, 10
 And to an hill herselfe withdraw aside,
 From whence she might behold that battailles proof
 And eke be safe from daunger far descryde :
 She him obeyd, and turnd a little wyde.

.

By this the dreadfull Beast drew nigh to hand,
 Halfe flying, and halfe footing in his hast,
 That with his largenesse measured much land,
 And made wide shadow under his huge wast ;
 As mountaine doth the valley overcast.
 Approaching nigh, he reared high afore 20
 His body monstrous, horrible, and vast,
 Which to increase his wondrous greatnesse more
 Was swolne with wrath, and poyson, and with bloudy
 gore ;

10. yede, go.

And over, all with brasen scales was armd,
 Like plated coate of steele, so couched neare,
 That nought mote perce, ne might his corse be harmd
 With dint of sword, nor push of pointed speare ;
 Which as an Eagle, seeing pray appeare,
 His aery plumes doth rouze, full rudely dight,
 So shaked he, that horroure was to heare, 39
 For as the clashing of an Armour bright,
 Such noyse his rouzed scales did send unto the knight.

His flaggy wings when forth he did display,
 Were like two sayles, in which the hollow wynd
 Is gathered full, and worketh speedy way :
 And eke the pennes, that did his pineons bynd,
 Were like mayne-yards, with flying canvas lynd,
 With which whenas him list the ayre to beat,
 And there by force unwonted passage find,
 The cloudes before him fled for terrour great, 40
 And all the heavens stood still amazed with his threat.

His huge long tayle wound up in hundred foldes,
 Does overspred his long bras-scaly backe,
 Whose wreathed boughts when ever he unfolds,
 And thicke entangled knots adown does slacke,
 Bespotted as with shields of red and blacke,
 It sweepeth all the land behind him farre,
 And of three furlongs does but litle lacke ;
 And at the point two stings in fixed arre,
 Both deadly sharpe, that sharpest steele exceeden farre. 50

But stings and sharpest steele did far exceed
 The sharpnesse of his cruell rending clawes ;

Dead was it sure, as sure as death in deed,
 What ever thing does touch his ravenous pawes,
 Or what within his reach he ever drawes.
 But his most hideous head my tounge to tell
 Does tremble : for his deepe devouring jawes
 Wide gaped, like the griesly mouth of hell,
 Through which into his darke abisse all ravin fell.

And that more wondrous was, in either jaw 60
 Three ranckes of yron teeth enraunged were,
 In which yet trickling bloud and gobbets raw
 Of late devoured bodies did appeare,
 That sight thereof bred cold congealed feare :
 Which to increase, and all atonce to kill,
 A cloud of smothering smoke and sulphur seare
 Out of his stinking gorge forth steemed still,
 That all the ayre about with smoke and stench did fill.

His blazing eyes, like two bright shining shields,
 Did burne with wrath, and sparkled living fyre ; 70
 As two broad Beacons, set in open fields,
 Send forth their flames farre off to every shyre,
 And warning give, that enemies conspyre,
 With fire and sword the region to invade ;
 So flam'd his eyne with rage and rancorous yre :
 But farre within, as in a hollow glade,
 Those glaring lampes were set, that made a dreadfull
 shade.

So dreadfully he towards him did pas,
 Forelifting up aloft his speckled brest,
 And often bounding on the brused gras, 80
 As for great joyance of his newcome guest.

Eftsoones he gan advance his haughtie crest,
 As chauffed Bore his bristles doth upreare,
 And shoke his scales to battell readie drest;
 That made the *Redcrosse* knight nigh quake for feare,
 As bidding bold defiance to his foeman nearc.

The knight gan fairely couch his steadie speare,
 And fiercely ran at him with rigorous might:
 The pointed steele arriving rudcly theare,
 His harder hide would neither perce, nor bight,
 But glauncing by forth passed forward right;
 Yet sore amoved with so puissant push,
 The wrathfull beast about him turned light,
 And him so rudely passing by, did brush
 With his long tayle, that horse and man to ground did
 rush.

Both horse and man up lightly rose againe,
 And fresh encounter towards him addrest:
 But th'idle stroke yet backe recoyld in vaine,
 And found no place his deadly point to rest.
 Exceeding rage enflam'd the furious Beast,
 To be avenged of so great despight;
 For never felt his imperceable brest
 So wondrous force, from hand of living wight;
 Yet had he prov'd the powre of many a puissant
 knight.

Then with his waving wings displayed wyde,
 Himselfe up high he lifted from the ground,
 And with strong flight did forcibly divide
 The yielding aire, which nigh too feeble found

83. *chauffed*, irritated.102. *imperceable*, not to be pierced.

Her flitting partes, and element unsound,
 To beare so great a weight : he cutting way 110
 With his broad sayles, about him soared round :
 At last low stouping with unweldie sway,
 Snatcht up both horse and man, to beare them quite
 away.

Long he them bore above the subject plaine,
 So farre as Ewghen bow a shaft may send,
 Till struggling strong did him at last constraîne,
 To let them downe before his flightes end :
 As hagdard hauke presuming to contend
 With hardie fowle, above his hable might,
 His wearie pounces all in vaine doth spend, 120
 To trusse the pray too heauie for his flight ;
 Which comming downe to ground, does free it selfe
 by fight.

He so disseized of his gryping grosse,
 The knight his thrillant speare againe assayd
 In his bras-plated body to embosse,
 And three mens strength unto the stroke he layd ;
 Wherewith the stiffe beame quaked, as affrayd,
 And glauncing from his scaly necke, did glyde
 Close under his left wing, then broad displayd.
 The percing steele there wrought a wound full wyde, 130
 That with the uncouth smart the Monster lowdly
 cryde.

He cryde, as raging seas are wont to rore
 When wintry storme his wrathfull wreck does threat,
 The rolling billowes beat the ragged shore,
 As they the earth would shoulder from her seat,

And greedie gulfe does gape, as he would eat
 His neighbour element in his revenge :
 Then gin the blustering brethren boldly threat
 To move the world from off his stedfast henge,
 And boystrous battell make, each other to avenge.

The steely head stucke fast still in his flesh,
 Till with his cruell clawes he snatcht the wood,
 And quite a sunder broke. Forth flowed fresh
 A gushing river of blacke goarie blood,
 That drowned all the land, whereon he stood ;
 The streame thereof would drive a water-mill.
 Trebly augmented was his furious mood
 With bitter sense of his deepe rooted ill,
 That flames of fire he threw forth from his large nose-
 thrill.

His hideous taylor then hurled he about,
 And therewith all enwrapt the nimble thyes
 Of his froth-fomy steed, whose courage stout
 Striving to loose the knot, that fast him tyes,
 Himselfe in streighter bandes too rash implies,
 That to the ground he is perforce constraynd
 To throw his rider : who can quickly ryse
 From off the earth, with durty bloud distaynd,
 For that reprochfull fall right fowly he disdaynd ;

And fiercely tooke his trenchand blade in hand,
 With which he stroke so furious and so fell,
 That nothing seemd the puissance could withstand.
 Upon his crest the hardned yron fell,

139. *henge*, hinge.157. *distaynd*, defiled.154. *implies*, enfolds.

But his more hardned crest was armd so well,
 That deeper dint therein it would not make ;
 Yet so extremely did the buffe him quell,
 That from thenceforth he shund the like to take,
 But when he saw them come, he did them still forsake.

The knight was wrath to see his stroke beguyld,
 And smote againe with more outrageous might ;
 But backe againe the sparckling steele recoyld, 170
 And left not any marke, where it did light ;
 As if in Adamant rocke it had bene pight.
 The beast impatient of his smarting wound,
 And of so fierce and forcible despiht,
 Thought with his wings to stye above the ground ;
 But his late wounded wing unserviceable found.

Then full of grieve and anguish vehement,
 He lowdly brayd, that like was never heard,
 And from his wide devouring oven sent
 A flake of fire, that flashing in his beard, 180
 Him all amazd, and almost made affeard :
 The scorching flame sore swinged all his face,
 And through his armour all his bodie seard,
 That he could not endure so cruell cace,
 But thought his armes to leave, and helmet to unlace.

Not that great Champion of the antique world,
 Whom famous Poetes verse so much doth vaunt,
 And hath for twelve huge labours high extold,
 So many furies and sharpe fits did haunt,
 When him the poysoned garment did enchaunt 190
 With *Centaures* bloud, and bloudie verses charm'd,

As did this knight twelve thousand dolours daunt,
 Whom fyrie steele now burnt, that earst him arm'd,
 That erst him goodly arm'd, now most of all him
 harm'd.

Faint, wearie, sore, emboyled, grieved, brent
 With heat, toyle, wounds, armes, smart, and inward
 fire

That never man such mischiefes did torment ;
 Death better were, death did he oft desire,
 But death will never come when needes require.
 Whom so dismayd when that his foe beheld,
 He cast to suffer him no more respire,
 But gan his sturdie sterne about to weld,
 And him so strongly stroke, that to the ground him
 feld.

200

It fortun'd (as faire it then befell)
 Behind his backe unweeting, where he stood,
 Of auncient time there was a springing well,
 From which fast trickled forth a silver flood,
 Full of great vertues, and for med'cine good.
 Whylome, before that cursed Dragon got
 That happie land, and all with innocent blood
 Defyld those sacred waves, it rightly hot
 The well of life, ne yet his vertues had forgot.

210

For unto life the dead it could restore,
 And guilt of sinfull crimes cleane wash away ;
 Those that with sicknesse were infected sore
 It could recure, and aged long decay

195. *emboyled*, heated.205. *unweeting*, unknowing.201. *respire*, breathe again.209. *Whylome*, formerly.

Renew, as one were borne that very day.
 Both *Silo* this, and *Jordan* did excell,
 And th'English *Bath*, and eke the german *Spau*,
 Ne can *Cephise*, nor *Hebrus* match this well : 220
 Into the same the knight backe overthrowen, fell.

Now gan the golden *Phæbus* for to steepe
 His fierie face in billowes of the west,
 And his faint steedes watred in Ocean deepe,
 Whiles from their journall labours they did rest,
 When that infernall Monster, having kest
 His wearie foe into that living well,
 Can high advance his broad discoloured brest,
 Above his wonted pitch, with countenance fell,
 And clapt his yron wings, as victor he did dwell. 230

Which when his pensive Ladie saw from farre,
 Great woe and sorrow did her soule assay,
 As weening that the sad end of the warre,
 And gan to highest God entirely pray,
 That feared chance from her to turne away :
 With folded hands and knees full lowly bent
 All night she watcht, ne once adowne would lay
 Her daintie limbs in her sad dreriment,
 But praying still did wake, and waking did lament.

The morrow next gan early to appeare,
 That *Titan* rose to runne his daily race ;
 But early ere the morrow next gan reare
 Out of the sea faire *Titans* deawy face,
 Up rose the gentle virgin from her place,
 And looked all about, if she might spy

Her loved knight to move his manly pace :
 For she had great doubt of his safety,
 Since late she saw him fall before his enemy.

At last she saw where he upstarted brave
 Out of the well, wherein he drenched lay ;
 As Eagle fresh out of the Ocean wave,
 Where he hath left his plumes all hoary gray,
 And deckt himselfe with feathers youthly gay
 Like Eyas hauke up mounts unto the skies,
 His newly budded pincons to assay,
 And marveiles at himselfe, still as he flies :
 So new this new-borne knight to battell new did
 rise.

Whom when the damned feend so fresh did spy,
 No wonder if he wondred at the sight,
 And doubted, whether his late enemy
 It were, or other new supplied knight.
 He, now to prove his late renewed might,
 High brandishing his bright deaw-burning blade,
 Upon his crested scalpe so sore did smite,
 That to the scull a yawning wound it made :
 The deadly dint his dulled senses all dismayd.

I wote not whether the revenging steele
 Were hardend with that holy water dew
 Wherein he fell, or sharper edge did feele,
 Or his baptized hands now greater grew ;
 Or other secret vertue did ensew ;
 Else never could the force of fleshly arme,

Ne molten mettall in his bloud embrew :
 For till that stownd could never wight him harne,
 By subtilty, nor slight, nor might, nor mighty charme.

The cruell wound enraged him so sore,
 That loud he yelled for exceeding paine ;
 As hundred ramping Lyons seem'd to rore,
 Whom ravenous hunger did thereto constraîne :
 Then gan he tosse aloft his stretched traine, 280
 And therewith scourge the buxome aire so sore,
 That to his force to yeelden it was faine ;
 Ne ought his sturdie strokes might stand afore,
 That high trees overthrew, and rocks in peeces tore.

The same advauncing high above his head,
 With sharpe intended sting so rude him smot,
 That to the earth him drove, as stricken dead,
 Ne living wight would have him life behot :
 The mortall sting his angry needle shot
 Quite through his shield, and in his shoulder seasd, 290
 Where fast it stucke, ne would there out be got :
 . The grieve thereof him wondrous sore diseasd,
 Ne might his ranckling paine with patience be appeasd.

But yet more mindfull of his honour deare
 Then of the grievous smart, which him did wring,
 From loathed soile he can him lightly reare,
 And strove to loose the farre infixed sting :
 Which when in vaine he tryde with struggeling,
 Inflam'd with wrath, his raging blade he heft,
 And strooke so strongly, that the knotty string 300
 Of his huge taile he quite a sunder cleft,
 Five joynts thereof he hewd, and but the stump him left.

Hart cannot thinke, what outrage, and what cryes,
 With foule enfouldred smoake and flashing fire,
 The hell-bred beast threw forth unto the skyes,
 That all was covered with darknesse dire :
 Then fraught with rancour, and engorged ire,

He cast at once him to avenge for all,
 And gathering up himselfe out of the mire,
 With his uneven wings did fiercely fall
 Upon his sunne-bright shield, and gript it fast withall. 310

Much was the man encombred with his hold,
 In feare to lose his weapon in his paw,
 Ne wist yet, how his talants to unfold ;
 Nor harder was from *Cerberus* greedie jaw
 To plucke a bone, then from his cruell claw
 To reave by strength the griped gage away :
 Thrise he assayd it from his foot to draw,
 And thrise in vaine to draw it did assay,
 It booted nought to thinke, to robbe him of his pray. 320

Tho when he saw no power might prevaile,
 His trustie sword he cald to his last aid,
 Wherewith he fiercely did his foe assaile,
 And double blowes about him stoutly laid,
 That glauncing fire out of the yron plaid ;
 As sparckles from the Andvile use to fly,
 When heaveie hammers on the wedge are swaid ;
 Therewith at last he forst him to unty
 One of his grasping feete, him to defend thereby.

The other foot, fast fixed on his shield,
 Whenas no strength, nor stroks mote him constraine 3.

304. *enfouldred*, hurled out like thunder and lightning.
 317. *reave*, take away.

To loose, ne yet the warlike pledge to yield,
 He smot thereat with all his might and maine,
 That nought so wondrous puissance might sustaine ;
 Upon the joynt the lucky steele did light,
 And made such way, that hewd it quite in twaine ;
 The paw yet missed not his minisht might,
 But hong still on the shield, as it at first was pight.

For grieve thereof, and divelish despight,
 From his infernall founace forth he threw 340
 Huge flames, that dimmed all the heavens light,
 Enrold in duskish smoke and brimstone blew ;
 As burning *Aetna* from his boyling stew
 Doth belch out flames, and rockes in peeces broke,
 And ragged ribs of mountaines molten new,
 Enwrapt in coleblacke clouds and filthy smoke,
 That all the land with stench, and heaven with horror
 choke.

The heate whereof, and harmefull pestilence
 So sore him noyd, that forst him to retire
 A little backward for his best defence, 350
 To save his bodie from the scorching fire,
 Which he from hellish entrailes did expire.
 It chaunst (eternall God that chaunce did guide)
 As he recoyled backward, in the mire
 His nigh forweariad feeble feet did slide,
 And downe he fell, with dread of shame sore terrifide.

There grew a goodly tree him faire beside,
 Loaden with fruit and apples rosie red,
 As they in pure vermillion had beene dide,
 Whereof great vertues over all were red : 360

For happie life to all, which thereon fed,
 And life eke everlasting did befall :
 Great God it planted in that blessed sted
 With his almightie hand, and did it call
The tree of life, the crime of our first fathers fall.

In all the world like was not to be found,
 Save in that soile, where all good things did grow,
 And freely sprong out of the fruitfull ground,
 As incorrupted Nature did them sow,
 Till that dread Dragon all did overthrow. 370
 Another like faire tree eke grew thereby,
 Whereof who so did eat, eftsoones did know
 Both good and ill : O mornefull memory :
 That tree through one mans fault hath doen us all to dy.

From that first tree forth flowd, as from a well,
 A trickling streame of Balme, most soveraine
 And daintie deare, which on the ground still fell,
 And overflowed all the fertill plaine,
 As it had deawed bene with timely raine :
 Life and long health that gracious ointment gave, 380
 And deadly woundes could heale, and reare againe
 The senselesse corse appointed for the grave.
 Into that same he fell : which did from death him save.

For nigh thereto the ever damned beast
 Durst not approach, for he was deadly made,
 And all that life preserved, did detest :
 Yet he it oft adventur'd to invade.
 By this the drouping day-light gan to fade,
 And yeeld his roome to sad succeeding night,

Who with her sable mantle gan to shade 390
 The face of earth, and wayes of living wight,
 And high her burning torch set up in heaven bright.

When gentle *Una* saw the second fall
 Of her deare knight, who wearie of long fight,
 And faint through losse of bloud, mov'd not at all,
 But lay as in a dreame of deepe delight,
 Besmeard with pretious Balme, whose vertuous might
 Did heale his wounds, and scorching heat alay,
 Againe she stricken was with sore affright,
 And for his safetie gan devoutly pray ; 400
 And watch the noyous night, and wait for joyous day.

The joyous day gan early to appeare,
 And faire *Aurora* from the deawy bed
 Of aged *Tithone* gan her selfe to reare,
 With rosie cheekes, for shame as blushing red ;
 Her golden lockes for haste were loosely shed
 About her eares, when *Una* her did marke
 Clymbe to her charet, all with flowers spread,
 From heaven high to chase the chearelesse darke ;
 With merry note her loud salutes the mounting larke. 410

Then freshly up arose the doughtie knight,
 All healed of his hurts and woundes wide,
 And did himselfe to battell readie dight ;
 Whose early foe awaiting him beside
 To have devoured, so soone as day he spyde,
 When now he saw himselfe so freshly reare,
 As if late fight had nought him damnifyde,
 He woxe dismayd, and gan his fate to feare ;
 Nathlesse with wonted rage he him advaunced neare.

And in his first encounter, gaping wide, 420
 He thought attonce him to have swallowd quight,
 And rusht upon him with outrageous pride ;
 Who him r'encountring fierce, as hauke in flight,
 Perforce rebutted backe. The weapon bright
 Taking advantage of his open jaw,
 Ran through his mouth with so importune might,
 That deepe emperst his darksome hollow maw,
 And back retyrd, his life bloud forth with all did draw.

So downe he fell, and forth his life did breath,
 That vanisht into smoke and cloudes swift ; 430
 So downe he fell, that th'earth him underneath
 Did grone, as feeble so great load to lift ;
 So downe he fell, as an huge rockie clift,
 Whose false foundation waves have washt away,
 With dreadfull poyse is from the mayneland rift,
 And rolling downe, great *Neptune* doth dismay ;
 So downe he fell, and like an heaped mountaine lay.

The knight himselfe even trembled at his fall,
 So huge and horrible a masse it seem'd ;
 And his deare Ladie, that beheld it all, 440
 Durst not approach for dread, which she misdeem'd,
 But yet at last, when as the direfull feend
 She saw not stirre, off-shaking vaine affright,
 She nigher drew, and saw that joyous end :
 Then God she praysd, and thankt her faithfull knight,
 That had atchiev'd so great a conquest by his might.

EDMUND SPENSER (1552-99)
The Faerie Queene, Book I, Canto XI

VII

MORTE D'ARTHUR

SO all day long the noise of battle roll'd
Among the mountains by the winter sea ;
Until King Arthur's table, man by man,
Had fall'n in Lyonness about their Lord,
King Arthur : then, because his wound was deep,
The bold Sir Bedivere uplifted him,
Sir Bedivere, the last of all his knights,
And bore him to a chapel nigh the field,
A broken chancel with a broken cross,
That stood on a dark strait of barren land.
On one side lay the Ocean, and on one
Lay a great water, and the moon was full.

10

'Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere :
'The sequel of to-day unsolders all
'The goodliest fellowship of famous knights
Whereof this world holds record. Such a sleep
They sleep—the men I loved. I think that we
Shall never more, at any future time,
Delight our souls with talk of knightly deeds,
Walking about the gardens and the halls
Of Camelot, as in the days that were.
I perish by this people which I made,—
Tho' Merlin sware that I should come again
To rule once more—but let what will be, be,
I am so deeply smitten thro' the helm
That without help I cannot last till morn.
Thou therefore take my brand Excalibur,
Which was my pride : for thou rememberest how

20

In those old days, one summer noon, an arm
 Rose up from out the bosom of the lake,
 Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
 Holding the sword—and how I row'd across
 And took it, and have worn it, like a king :
 And, wheresoever I am sung or told
 In aftertime, this also shall be known :
 But now delay not : take Excalibur,
 And fling him far into the middle mere :
 Watch what thou seest, and lightly bring me word."

To him replied the bold Sir Bedivere :
 " It is not meet, Sir King, to leave thee thus,
 Aidless, alone, and smitten thro' the helm—
 A little thing may harm a wounded man.
 Yet I thy hest will all perform at full,
 Watch what I see, and lightly bring thee word."

So saying, from the ruin'd shrine he stept
 And in the moon athwart the place of tombs,
 Where lay the mighty bones of ancient men,
 Old knights, and over them the sea-wind sang
 Shrill, chill, with flakes of foam. He, stepping down
 By zig-zag paths, and juts of pointed rock,
 Came on the shining levels of the lake.

There drew he forth the brand Excalibur,
 And o'er him, drawing it, the winter moon,
 Brightening the skirts of a long cloud, ran forth
 And sparkled keen with frost against the hilt :
 For all the haft twinkled with diamond sparks,
 Myriads of topaz-lights, and jacinth-work
 Of subtlest jewellery. He gazed so long
 That both his eyes were dazzled, as he stood,
 This way and that dividing the swift mind,
 In act to throw : but at the last it seem'd
 Better to leave Excalibur conceal'd

There in the many-knotted waterflags,
That whistled stiff and dry about the marge.
So strode he back slow to the wounded King.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere :
" Hast thou perform'd my mission which I gave ?
What is it thou hast seen ? or what hast heard ? "

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere :
" I heard the ripple washing in the reeds,
And the wild water lapping on the crag." 70

To whom replied King Arthur, faint and pale :
" Thou hast betray'd thy nature and thy name,
Not rendering true answer, as besem'd
Thy fealty, nor like a noble knight :
For surer sign had follow'd, either hand,
Or voice, or else a motion of the mere.
This is a shameful thing for men to lie.
Yet now, I charge thee, quickly go again
As thou art lief and dear, and do the thing 80
I bad thee, watch, and lightly bring me word."

Then went Sir Bedivere the second time
Across the ridge, and paced beside the mere,
Counting the dewy pebbles, fix'd in thought ;
But when he saw the wonder of the hilt,
How curiously and strangely chased, he smote .
His palms together, and he cried aloud.

" And if indeed I cast the brand away,
Surely a precious thing, one worthy note,
Should thus be lost for ever from the earth, 90
Which might have pleased the eyes of many men.
What good should follow this, if this were done ?
What harm, undone ? deep harm to disobey,
Seeing obedience is the bond of rule.
Were it well to obey then, if a king demand
An act unprofitable, against himself ?

The King is sick, and knows not what he does.
 What record, or what relic of my lord
 Should be to aftertime, but empty breath
 And rumours of a doubt? but were this kept,
 Stored in some treasure-house of mighty kings,
 Some one might show it at a joust of arms,
 Saying, 'King Arthur's sword, Excalibur,
 Wrought by the lonely maiden of the Lake.
 Nine years she wrought it, sitting in the deeps
 Upon the hidden bases of the hills.'
 So might some old man speak in the aftertime
 To all the people, winning reverence.
 But now much honour and much fame were lost."
 So spake he, clouded with his own conceit,
 And hid Excalibur the second time,
 And so strode back slow to the wounded King.
 Then spoke King Arthur, breathing heavily :
 "What is it thou hast seen? or what hast heard?"
 And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere :
 "I heard the water lapping on the crag,
 And the long ripple washing in the reeds."
 To whom replied King Arthur, much in wrath :
 "Ah, miserable and unkind, untrue,
 Unknightly, traitor-hearted! Woe is me!
 Authority forgets a dying king,
 Laid widow'd of the power in his eye
 That bow'd the will. I see thee what thou art,
 For thou, the latest-left of all my knights,
 In whom should meet the offices of all,
 Thou wouldst betray me for the precious hilt;
 Either from lust of gold, or like a girl
 Valuing the giddy pleasure of the eyes.
 Yet, for a man may fail in duty twice,
 And the third time may prosper, get thee hence :

But, if thou spare to fling Excalibur,
I will arise and slay thee with my hands."

Then quickly rose Sir Bedivere, and ran,
And, leaping down the ridges lightly, plunged
Among the bulrush-beds, and clutch'd the sword,
And strongly wheel'd and threw it. The great brand
Made lightnings in the splendour of the moon,
And flashing round and round, and whirl'd in an arch,
Shot like a streamer of the northern morn,
Seen where the moving isles of winter shock

140

By night, with noises of the northern sea.
So flash'd and fell the brand Excalibur :
But ere he dipt the surface, rose an arm
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
And caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd him
Three times, and drew him under in the mere.
And lightly went the other to the King.

Then spoke King Arthur, drawing thicker breath :
" Now I see by thine eyes that this is done.
Speak out : what is it thou hast heard, or seen ? "

150

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere :
" Sir King, I closed mine eyelids, lest the gems
Should blind my purpose, for I never saw,
Nor shall see, here or elsewhere, till I die,
Not tho' I live three lives of mortal men,
So great a miraele as yonder hilt.

Then with both hands I flung him, wheeling him ;
But when I look'd again, behold an arm,
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
That caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd him
Three times, and drew him under in the mere."

160

And answer made King Arthur, breathing hard :
" My end draws nigh ; 'tis time that I were gone.
Make broad thy shoulders to receive my weight,

And bear me to the margin ; yet I fear
 My wound hath taken cold, and I shall die."
 So saying, from the pavement he half rose,
 Slowly, with pain, reclining on his arm,
 And looking wistfully with wide blue eyes
 As in a picture. Him Sir Bedivere
 Remorsefully regarded thro' his tears,
 And would have spoken, but he found not words,
 Then took with care, and kneeling on one knee,
 O'er both his shoulders drew the languid hands,
 And rising bore him thro' the place of tombs.
 But, as he walk'd, King Arthur panted hard,
 Like one that feels a nightmare on his bed
 When all the house is mute. So sigh'd the King,
 Muttering and murmuring at his ear " Quick, quick !
 I fear it is too late, and I shall die."
 But the other swiftly strode from ridge to ridge,
 Clothed with his breath, and looking, as he walk'd,
 Larger than human on the frozen hills.
 He heard the deep behind him, and a cry
 Before. His own thought drove him like a goad.
 Dry clash'd his harness in the icy caves
 And barren chasms, and all to left and right
 The bare black cliff clang'd round him, as he based
 His feet on juts of slippery crag that rang
 Sharp-smitten with the dint of armed heels—
 And on a sudden, lo ! the level lake,
 And the long glories of the winter moon.
 Then saw they how there hove a dusky barge,
 Dark as a funeral scarf from stem to stern,
 Beneath them ; and descending they were ware
 That all the decks were dense with stately forms
 Black-stoled, black-hooded, like a dream—by these
 Three Queens with crowns of gold—and from them rose

A cry that shiver'd to the tingling stars,
And, as it were one voice, an agony 200
Of lamentation, like a wind, that shrills
All night in a waste land, where no one comes,
Or hath come, since the making of the world.

Then murmur'd Arthur, "Place me in the barge,"
And to the barge they came. There those three Queens
Put forth their hands, and took the King, and wept.
But she, that rose the tallest of them all
And fairest, laid his head upon her lap,
And loosed the shatter'd casque, and chafed his hands,
And call'd him by his name, complaining loud, 210
And dropping bitter tears against his brow
Striped with dark blood : for all his face was white
And colourless, and like the wither'd moon
Smote by the fresh beam of the springing east ;
And all his greaves and cuisses dash'd with drops
Of onset ; and the light and lustrous curls—
That made his forehead like a rising sun
High from the dais-throne—were parch'd with dust ;
Or, clotted into points and hanging loose,
Mix'd with the knightly growth that fringed his lips. 220
So like a shatter'd column lay the King ;
Not like that Arthur who, with lance in rest,
From spur to plume a star of tournament,
Shot thro' the lists at Camelot, and charged
Before the eyes of ladies and of kings.

Then loudly cried the bold Sir Bedivere,
" Ah ! my Lord Arthur, whither shall I go ?
Where shall I hide my forehead and my eyes ?
For now I see the true old times are dead,
When every morning brought a noble chance, 230
And every chance brought out a noble knight.
Such times have been not since the light that led

The holy Elders with the gift of myrrh.
 But now the whole ROUND TABLE is dissolved
 Which was an image of the mighty world ;
 And I, the last, go forth companionless,
 And the days darken round me, and the years,
 Among new men, strange faces, other minds."

And slowly answer'd Arthur from the barge :
 " The old order changeth, yielding place to new, 240
 And God fulfils himself in many ways,
 Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.
 Comfort thyself : what comfort is in me ?
 I have lived my life, and that which I have done
 May He within himself make pure ! but thou,
 If thou shouldst never see my face again,
 Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by prayer
 Than this world dreams of. Wherefore, let thy voice
 Rise like a fountain for me night and day.
 For what are men better than sheep or goats 250
 That nourish a blind life within the brain,
 If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
 Both for themselves and those who call them friend ?
 For so the whole round earth is every way
 Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.
 But now farewell. I am going a long way
 With these thou seest—if indeed I go—
 (For all my mind is clouded with a doubt)
 To the island-valley of Avilion ;
 Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow, 260
 Nor ever wind blows loudly ; but it lies
 Deep-meadow'd, happy, fair with orchard-lawns
 And bowery hollows crown'd with summer sea,
 Where I will heal me of my grievous wound."

So said he, and the barge with oar and sail
 Moved from the brink, like some full breasted swan

That, fluting a wild carol ere her death,
Ruffles her pure cold plume, and takes the flood
With swarthy webs. Long stood Sir Bedivere
Revolving many memories, till the hull
Look'd one black dot against the verge of dawn,
And on the mere the wailing died away.

LORD TENNYSON (1809-92)

VIII

EDWARD, EDWARD

WHY does your brand sae drop wi' blude,
Edward, Edward ?

Why does your brand sae drop wi' blude,
And why sae sad gang ye, O ? "

" O I hae kill'd my hawk sae gude,
Mither, mither ;

O I hae kill'd my hawk sae gude,
And I had nae mair but he, O."

" Your hawk's blude was never sae red,
Edward, Edward ;

Your hawk's blude was never sae red,
My dear son, I tell thee, O."

" O I hae kill'd my red-roan steed,
Mither, mither ;

O I hae kill'd my red-roan steed,
That erst was sae fair and free, O."

" Your steed was auld, and ye hae got mair,
Edward, Edward ;

Your steed was auld, and ye hae got mair ;
Some other dule ye dree, O."

" O I hae kill'd my father dear,
Mither, mither ;

O I hae kill'd my father dear,
Alas, and wae is me, O ! "

20. *dule ye dree*, grief you'll come to feel.

“ And whatten penance will ye dree for that,
Edward, Edward ?

Whatten penance will ye dree for that ?
My dear son, now tell me, O.”

“ I’ll set my feet in yonder boat,
Mither, mither ;

30

I’ll set my feet in yonder boat,
And I’ll fare over the sea, O.”

“ And what will ye do wi’ your tow’rs and your ha’,
Edward, Edward ?

And what will ye do wi’ your tow’rs and your ha’,
That were sae fair to see, O ? ”

“ I’ll let them stand till they doun fa’,
Mither, mither ;

I’ll let them stand till they doun fa’,
For here never mair maun I be, O.”

40

“ And what will ye leave to your bairns and your wife,
Edward, Edward ?

And what will ye leave to your bairns and your wife,
When ye gang owre the sea, O ? ”

“ The world’s room : let them beg through life,
Mither, mither ;

The world’s room : let them beg through life ;
For them never mair will I see, O.”

“ And what will ye leave to your ain mither dear,
Edward, Edward ?

50

And what will ye leave to your ain mither dear,
My dear son, now tell me, O ? ”

“ The curse of hell frae me sall ye bear,
Mither, mither ;

The curse of hell frae me sall ye bear :
Sic counsels ye gave to me, O ! ”

IX

THOMAS RHYMER

TRUE THOMAS lay oer yond grassy bank,
 And he beheld a ladie gay,
 A ladie that was brisk and bold,
 Come riding oer the fernie brae.

Her skirt was of the grass-green silk,
 Her mantel of the velvet fine,
 At ilka tett of her horse's mane
 Hung fifty silver bells and nine.

True Thomas he took off his hat,
 And bowed him low down till his knee :
 " All hail, thou mighty Queen of Heaven !
 For your peer on earth I never did see."

" O no, O no, True Thomas," she says,
 " That name does not belong to me ;
 I am but the queen of fair Elfland,
 And I'm come here for to visit thee."

" But ye maun go wi me now, Thomas,
 True Thomas, ye maun go wi me,
 For ye maun serve me seven years,
 Thro weel or wae as may chance to be."

7. tett, lock.

She turned about her milk-white steed,
And took True Thomas up behind,
And aye whenever her bridle rang,
The steed flew swifter than the wind.

For forty days and forty nights
He wade thro red blude to the knee,
And he saw neither sun nor moon,
But heard the roaring of the sea.

O they rade on, and further on,
Until they came to a garden green : 30
“ Light down, light down, ye ladie free,
Some of that fruit let me pull to thee.”

“ O no, O no, True Thomas,” she says,
“ That fruit maun not be touched by thee,
For a’ the plagues that are in hell
Light on the fruit of this countrie.

“ But I have a loaf here in my lap,
Likewise a bottle of claret wine,
And now ere we go farther on,
We’ll rest a while, and ye may dine.” 40

When he had eaten and drunk his fill,
“ Lay down your head upon my knee,”
The lady sayd, “ ere we climb yon hill,
And I will show you fairlies three.

“ O see not ye yon narrow road,
So thick beset wi thorns and briers ?
That is the path of righteousness,
Tho after it but few enquires.

" And see not ye that braid braid road,
That lies across yon lillie leven ?
That is the path of wickedness,
Tho some call it the road to heaven.

50

" And see not ye that bonny road,
Which winds about the fernie brae ?
That is the road to fair Elfland,
Whe[re] you and I this night maun gae.

" But Thomas, ye maun hold your tongue,
Whatever you may hear or see,
For gin ae word you should chance to speak,
You will neer get back to your ain countrie."

60

He has gotten a coat of the even cloth,
And a pair of shoes of velvet green,
And till seven years were past and gone
True Thomas on earth was never seen.

X

JOCK O THE SIDE

NOW Liddisdale has ridden a raid,
 But I wat they had better staid at hame ;
 For Mitchel o Winfield he is dead,
 And my son Johnie is prisner tane."
 With my fa ding diddle, la la dow diddle.

For Mangerton House auld Downie is gane ;
 Her coats she has kilted up to her knee,
 And down the water wi speed she rins,
 While tears in spaits fa fast frae her eie.

Then up and bespake the lord Mangerton : 10
 " What news, what news, sister Downie, to me ? "
 " Bad news, bad news, my lord Mangerton ;
 Mitchel is killd, and tane they hae my son Johnie."

" Neer fear, sister Downie," quo Mangerton ;
 " I hae yokes of oxen four and twentie,
 My barns, my byres, and my faulds, a' weel filld,
 And I'll part wi them a' ere Johnie shall die.

" Three men I'll take to set him free,
 Weel harnessd a' wi best o steel ;
 The English rogues may hear, and drie 20
 The weight o their braid swords to feel.

20-21. *drie . . . to feel*, be compelled to feel.

" The Laird's Jock ane, the Laird's Wat twa,
 Oh, Hobie Noble, thou ane maun be ;
 Thy coat is blue, thou has been true,
 Since England banished thee, to me."

Now Hobie was an English man,
 In Bewcastle-dale was bred and born ;
 But his misdeeds they were sae great,
 They banishd him neer to return.

Lord Mangerton them orders gave, 30
 " Your horses the wrang way maun a' be shod ;
 Like gentlemen ye must not seem,
 But look like corn-caugers gawn ae road.

" Your armour gude ye maunna shaw,
 Nor ance appear like men o weir ;
 As country lads be all arrayd,
 Wi branks and brecham on ilk mare."

Sae now a' their horses are shod the wrang way,
 And Hobie has mounted his grey sae fine,
 Jock his lively bay, Wat 's on his white horse behind, 40
 And on they rode for the water o Tynec.

At the Choler-ford they a' light down,
 And there, wi the help o the light o the moon,
 A tree they cut, wi fifteen naggs upo ilk side,
 To clim^t up the wa o Newcastle town.

But whea they cam to Newcastle town,
 And were alighted at the wa,
 They fand their tree three ells oer laigh,
 They fand their stiek baith short and sma.

33. *corn-caugers*, hucksters of corn. 35. *weir*, war.
 37. *branks*, bridles. *brecham*, packsaddle.
 44. *naggs*, notches. 46. *laigh*, low.

Then up and spake the Laird's ain Jock, 50
 "There's naething for 't, the gates we maun force";
 But when they cam the gates unto,
 A proud porter withstood baith men and horse.

His neck in twa I wat they hae wrung,
 Wi hand or foot he neer playd paw;
 His life and his keys at anes they hae tane,
 And cast his body ahind the wa.

Now soon they reach Newcastle jail,
 And to the prisner thus they call:
 "Sleips thou, wakes thou, Jock o the Side? 60
 Or is thou wearied o thy thrall?"

Jock answers thus, wi dolefu tone:
 Aft, aft I wake, I seldom sleip;
 But wha's this kens my name sae weel,
 And thus to hear my waes do[e]s seik?

Then up and spake the good Laird's Jock,
 "Neer fear ye now, my billie," quo he;
 "For here's the Laird's Jock, the Laird's Wat,
 And Hobie Noble, come to set thee free."

"Oh, had thy tongue, and speak nae mair, 70
 And o thy tawk now let me be!
 For if a' Liddisdale were here the night,
 The morn's the day that I maun die.

"Full fifteen stane o Spanish iron
 They hae laid a' right sair on me;
 Wi locks and keys I am fast bound
 Into this dungeon mirk and drearie."

55. *neer played paw*, never stirred again.

61. *thrall*, bondage.

" Fear ye no that," quo the Laird's Jock ;
 " A faint heart neer wan a fair ladie ;
 Work thou within, we'll work without,
 And I'll be bound we set thee free."

80

The first strong dore that they came at,
 They loosed it without a key ;
 The next chaind dore that they cam at,
 They gard it a' in flinders flee.

The prisner now, upo his back,
 The Laird's Jock's gotten up fu hie ;
 And down the stair him, irons and a',
 Wi nae sma speed and joy brings he.

" Now, Jock, I wat," quo Hobie Noble,
 " Part o the weight ye may lay on me " ;
 " I wat weel no," quo the Laird's Jock,
 " I count him lighter than a flee."

90

Sae out at the gates they a' are gane,
 The prisner's set on horseback hie ;
 And now wi speed they've tane the gate,
 While ilk ane jokes fu wantonlie.

" O Jock, sae winsomely 's ye ride,
 Wi baith your feet upo ae side !
 Sae weel 's ye're harnessd, and sae trig !
 In troth ye sit like ony bride."

100

The night, tho wat, they didna mind,
 But hied them on fu mirrilie,
 Until they cam to Cholerford brae,
 Where the water ran like mountains hie.

But when they came to Cholerford,
 There they met with an auld man ;
 Says, Honest man, will the water ride ?
 Tell us in haste, if that ye can.

“ I wat weel no,” quo the good auld man ; 110
 “ Here I hae livd this threty yeirs and three,
 And I neer yet saw the Tyne sae big,
 Nor rinning ance sae like a sea.”

Then up and spake the Laird's saft Wat,
 The greatest coward in the company ;
 “ Now halt, now halt, we needna try 't ;
 The day is comd we a' maun die ! ”

“ Poor faint-hearted thief ! ” quo the Laird's Jock,
 “ There'll nae man die but he that's fie ;
 I'll lead ye a' right safely through ; 120
 Lift ye the prisner on ahint me.”

Sae now the water they a' hae tane,
 By anes and twas they a' swam through ;
 “ Here are we a' safe,” says the Laird's Jock,
 “ And, poor faint Wat, what think ye now ? ”

They scarce the ither side had won,
 When twenty men they saw pursue ;
 Frae Newcastle town they had been sent,
 A' English lads, right good and true.

But when the land-sergeant the water saw, 130
 “ It winna ride, my lads,” quo he ;
 Then out he cries, Ye the prisner may take,
 But leave the irons, I pray, to me.

“ I wat weel no,” cryd the Laird’s Jock,
 “ I’ll keep them a’, shoon to my mare they’ll be ;
 My good grey mare, for I am sure,
 She’s bought them a’ fu dear frae thee.”

Sae now they’re away for Liddisdale,
 Een as fast as they could them hie ;
 The prisner’s brought to his ain fireside,
 And there o’s airns they make him free.

“ Now, Jock, my billie,” quo a’ the three,
 “ The day was comd thou was to die ;
 But thou’s as well at thy ain fire-side,
 Now sitting, I think, tween thee and me.”

They hae gard fill up ae punch-bowl,
 And after it they maun hae anither,
 And thus the night they a’ hae spent,
 Just as they had been brither and brither.

XI

THE BALLAD OF ISKANDER

*Aflaton and Aristu and King Iskander
are Plato, Aristotle, Alexander.*

SULTAN ISKANDER sat him down
On his golden throne, in his golden crown,
And shouted, " Wine and flute-girls three,
And the Captain, ho ! of my ships at sea."

He drank his bowl of wine ; he kept
The flute-girls dancing till they wept,
Praised and kissed their painted lips,
And turned to the Captain of All his Ships.

And cried, " O Lord of my Ships that go
From the Persian Gulf to the Pits of Snow, 10
Inquire for men unknown to man ! "
Said Sultan Iskander of Yoonistan.

" Daroosh is dead, and I am King
Of Everywhere and Everything :
Yet leagues and leagues away for sure
The lion-hearted dream of war.

" Admiral, I command you sail !
Take you a ship of silver mail,
And fifty sailors, young and bold,
And stack provision deep in the hold, 20

134 TWENTY-TWO STORY POEMS

" And seek out twenty men that know
All babel tongues which flaunt and flow ;
And stay ! Impress those learned two,
Old Aflatun, and Aristu.

" And set your prow South-western ways
A thousand bright and dimpling days,
And find me lion-hearted Lords
With breasts to feed Our rusting swords."

The Captain of the Ships bowed low.
" Sir," he replied, " I will do so."

And down he rode to the harbour mouth,
To choose a boat to carry him South.

And he launched a ship of silver mail,
And fifty lads to hoist the sail,
And twenty wise—all tongues they knew,
And Aflatun and Aristu.

There had not dawned the second day
But the glittering galleon sailed away,
And through the night like one great bell
The marshalled armies sang farewell.

In twenty days the silver ship
Had passed the Isle of Serendip,
And made the flat Araunian coasts
Inhabited, at noon, by Ghosts.

In thirty days the ship was far
Beyond the land of Calcobar,
Where men drink Dead Men's Blood for wine,
And dye their beards alizarine.

But on the hundredth day there came
 Storm with his windy wings aflame, 50
 And drave them out to that Lone Sea
 Whose shores are near Eternity.

For seven years and seven years
 Sailed those forgotten mariners,
 Nor could they spy on either hand
 The faintest level of good red land.

Bird or fish they saw not one ;
 There swam no ship beside their own,
 And day-night long the lilled Deep
 Lay round them, with its flower asleep. 60

The beams began to warp and crack,
 The silver plates turned filthy black,
 And drooping down on the carven rails
 Hung those once lovely silken sails.

And all the great ship's crew who were
 Such noble lads to do and dare
 Grew old and tired of the changeless sky
 And laid them down on the deck to die.

And they who spake all tongues there be
 Made antics with solemnity, 70
 Or closely huddled each to each
 Talked ribald in a foreign speech.

And Aflatun and Aristu
 Let their Beards grow, and their Beards grew
 Round and about the mainmast tree
 Where they stood still, and watched the sea.

And day by day their Captain grey
 Knelt on the rotting poop to pray :
 And yet despite ten thousand prayers
 They saw no ship that was not theirs.

80

When thrice the seven years had passed
 They saw a ship, a ship at last !
 Untarnished glowed its silver mail,
 Windless bellied its silken sail.

With a shout the grizzled sailors rose
 Cursing the years of sick repose,
 And they who spake in tongues unknown
 Gladly reverted to their own.

The Captain leapt and left his prayers
 And hastened down the dust-dark stairs,
 And taking to hand a brazen Whip
 He woke to life the long dead ship.

90

But Aflatun and Aristu,
 Who had no work that they could do,
 Gazed at the stranger Ship and Sea
 With their beards around the mainmast tree.

Nearer and nearer the new boat came,
 Till the hands cried out on the old ship's shame—
 "Silken sail to a silver boat,
 We too shone when we first set float !"

100

Swifter and swifter the bright boat sped,
 But the hands spake thin like men long dead—
*"How striking like that boat were we
 In the days, sweet days, when we put to sea."*

The ship all black and the ship all white
Met like the meeting of day and night,
Met, and there lay serene dark green
A twilight yard of the sea between.

And the twenty masters of foreign speech
Of every tongue they knew tried each ;
Smiling, the silver Captain heard,
But shook his head and said no word.

110

Then Aflatun and Aristu
Addressed the silver Lord anew,
Speaking their language of Yoonistan
Like countrymen to a countryman.

And " Whence," they cried, " O Sons of Pride,
Sail you the dark eternal tide ?
Lie your halls to the South or North,
And who is the King that sent you forth ? "

120

" We live," replied that Lord with a smile,
" A mile beyond the millionth mile.
We know not the South and we know not North,
And *Sultan Iskander* sent us forth."

Said Aristu to Aflatun—
" Surely our King, despondent soon,
Has sent this second ship to find
Unconquered tracts of humankind."

And Aflatun turned round on him
Laughing a bitter laugh and grim.
" Alas," he said, " O Aristu,
A white weak thin old fool are you.

130

" And does yon silver Ship appear
 As she had journeyed twenty year ?
 And has that silver Captain's face
 A mortal or Immortal grace ?

" Theirs is the land (as well I know)
 Where live the Shapes of Things Below ;
 Theirs is the country where they keep .
 The Images men see in Sleep.

140

" Theirs is the Land Beyond the Door,
 And theirs the old ideal shore.
 They steer our ship : behold our crew
 Ideal, and our Captain too.

" And lo ! beside that mainmast tree
 Two tall and shining forms I see,
 And they are what we ought to be,
 Yet we are they, and they are we."

He spake, and some young Zephyr stirred ;
 The two ships touched : no sound was heard ;
 The Black Ship crumbled into air ;
 Only the Phantom Ship was there.

150

And a great cry rang round the sky
 Of glorious singers sweeping by,
 And calm and fair on waves that shone
 The Silver Ship sailed on and on.

JAMES ELROY FLECKER (1884-1915)

XII

THE BALLAD OF "BEAU BROCADE"

"Hark! I hear the sound of coaches!"

Beggar's Opera

(i)

SEVENTEEN hundred and thirty-nine :—
That was the date of this tale of mine.

First great GEORGE was buried and gone ;
GEORGE the Second was plodding on.

LONDON then, as the " Guides " aver,
Shared its glories with *Westminster*.

And people of rank, to correct their ' tone,'
Went out of town to *Marybone*.

Those were the days of the War with *Spain*,
PORTO-BELLO would soon be ta'en ;

10

WHITEFIELD preached to the colliers grim,
Bishops in lawn sleeves preached at him ;

WALPOLE talked of " a man and his price " ;
Nobody's virtue was over-nice :—

Those, in fine, were the brave days when
Coaches were stopped by . . . *Highwaymen* !

And of all the knights of the gentle trade
Nobody bolder than "BEAU BROCADE."

This they knew on the whole way down ;
Best,—maybe,—at the "*Oak and Crown*."

20

(For timrous cits on their pilgrimage
Would ' club ' for a ' Guard ' to ride the stage :

And the Guard that rode on more than one
Was the Host of this hostel's sister's son.)

Open we here on a March day fine,
Under the oak with the hanging sign.

There was Barber DICK with his basin by ;
Cobbler JOE with the patch on his eye ;

Portly product of Beef and Beer,
John the host, he was standing near.

30

Straining and creaking, with wheels awry,
Lumbering came the "*Plymouth Fly*" ;—

Lumbering up from *Bagshot Heath*,
Guard in the basket armed to the teeth ;

Passengers heavily armed inside ;
Not the less surely the coach had been tried !

Tried !—but a couple of miles away,
By a well-dressed man !—in the open day !

Tried successfully, never a doubt,—
Pockets of passengers all turned out !

40

Cloak-bags rifled, and cushions ripped,—
Even an Ensign's wallet stripped !

Even a Methodist hosier's wife
Offered the choice of her Money or Life !

Highwayman's manners no less polite,
Hoped that their coppers (returned) were right ;—

Sorry to find the company poor,
Hoped next time they'd travel with more ;—

Plucked them all at his ease, in short :—
Such was the "*Plymouth Fly's*" report.

50

Sympathy ! horror ! and wonderment !
" Catch the Villain ! " (But Nobody went.)

Hosier's wife led into the Bar ;
(That's where the best strong waters are !)

Followed the tale of the hundred-and-one
Things that Somebody ought to have done.

Ensign (of BRAGG's) made a terrible clangour :
But for the Ladies had drawn his hanger !

Robber, of course, was " BEAU BROCADE " ;
Out-spoken DOLLY the Chambermaid.

60

Devonshire DOLLY, plump and red,
Spoke from the gallery overhead ;—

Spoke it out boldly, staring hard :—
" Why didn't you shoot then, GEORGE the Guard ? "

Spoke it out bolder, seeing him mute :—
 " GEORGE the Guard, why didn't you shoot ? "

Portly JOHN grew pale and red,
 (JOHN was afraid of her, people said ;)

Gasped that " DOLLY was surely cracked,"
 (JOHN was afraid of her—that's a fact !)

70

GEORGE the Guard grew red and pale,
 Slowly finished his quart of ale :—

" Shoot ? Why—Rabbit him !—didn't he shoot ? "
 Muttered—" The Baggage was far too 'cute ! "

" Shoot ? Why he'd flashed the pan in his eye ! "
 Muttered—" She'd pay for it by and by ! "
 Further than this made no reply.

Nor could a further reply be made,
 For GEORGE *was in league with* " BEAU BROCADE " !

And JOHN the Host, in his wakefullest state,
 Was not—on the whole—immaculate.

So

But nobody's virtue was over-nice
 When WALPOLE talked of " a man and his price " ;

And wherever Purity found abode,
 'Twas certainly *not* on a posting road.

(ii)

' Forty ' followed to ' Thirty-nine.'
 Glorious days of the *Hanover* line !

Princes were born, and drums were banged ;
Now and then batches of Highwaymen hanged.

"Glorious news !"—from the *Spanish Main* ; 90
PORTO-BELLO at last was ta'en.

"Glorious news !"—for the liquor trade ;
Nobody dreamed of "BEAU BROCADE."

People were thinking of *Spanish Crowns* ;
Money was coming from sea-port towns !

Nobody dreamed of "BEAU BROCADE,"
(Only DOLLY the Chambermaid !)

Blessings on VERNON ! Fill up the cans ;
Money was coming in "*Flys*" and "*Vans*."

Possibly JOHN the Host had heard ; 100
Also, certainly, GEORGE the Guard.

And DOLLY had possibly tidings, too,
That made her rise from her bed anew,

Plump as ever, but stern of eye,
With a fixed intention to warn the "*Fly*."

Lingering only at JOHN his door,
Just to make sure of a jerky snore ;

Saddling the grey mare, *Dumpling Star* ;
Fetching the pistol out of the bar ;

(The old horse-pistol that, they say, 110
Came from the battle of *Malplaquet* ;)

Loading with powder that maids would use,
Even in 'Forty,' to clear the flues ;

And a couple of silver buttons, the Squire
Gave her, away in *Devonshire*.

These she wadded—for want of better—
With the B—SH—P of L—ND—N's "Pastoral Letter" ;

Looked to the flint, and hung the whole,
Ready to use, at her pocket-hole.

Thus equipped and accoutred, DOLLY
Clattered away to "*Exciseman's Folly*" ;—

120

Such was the name of a ruined abode,
Just on the edge of the *London* road.

Thence she thought she might safely try,
As soon as she saw it, to warn the "*Fly*."

But, as chance fell out, her rein she drew,
As the BEAU came cantering into the view.

By the light of the moon she could see him drest
In his famous gold-sprigged tambour vest ;

And under his silver-grey surtout,
The laced, historical coat of blue,

130

That he wore when he went to *London-Spaw*,
And robbed Sir MUNGO MUCKLETHRAW.

Out-spoke DOLLY the Chambermaid,
(Trembling a little, but not afraid,)
"Stand and Deliver, O 'BEAU BROCADE' !"

THE BALLAD OF BEAU BROCADE 145

But the BEAU rode nearer, and would not speak,
For he saw by the moonlight a rosy cheek ;

And a spavined mare with a rusty hide ;
And a girl with her hand at her pocket-side. 140

So never a word he spoke as yet,
For he thought 'twas a freak of MEG or BET ;—
A freak of the “ *Rose* ” or the “ *Rummer* ” set.

Out-spoke DOLLY the Chambermaid,
(Tremulous now, and sore afraid,)
“ Stand and Deliver, O ‘ BEAU BROCADE ’ ! ”—

Firing then, out of sheer alarm,
Hit the BEAU in the bridle-arm.

Button the first went none knows where,
But it carried away his *solitaire* ; 150

Button the second a circuit made,
Glanced in under the shoulder-blade ;—
Down from the saddle fell “ BEAU BROCADE ” !

Down from the saddle and never stirred !—
DOLLY grew white as a *Windsor* curd.

Slipped not less from the mare, and bound
Strips of her kirtle about his wound.

Then, lest his Worship should rise and flee,
Fettered his ankles—tenderly.

Jumped on his chestnut, BET the fleet 160
(Called after BET of *Portugal Street*) ;

Came like the wind to the old Inn-door ;—
Roused fat JOHN from a threefold snore ;—

Vowed she'd 'peach if he misbehaved . . .
Briefly, the "*Plymouth Fly*" was saved !

Staines and *Windsor* were all on fire :—
DOLLY was wed to a *Yorkshire* squire ;
Went to Town at the K—G's desire !

But whether His M—J—STY saw her or not,
HOGARTH jotted her down on the spot ;

And something of DOLLY one still may trace
In the fresh contours of his "*Milkmaid's*" face.

GEORGE the Guard fled over the sea :
JOHN had a fit—of perplexity ;

Turned King's evidence, sad to state ;—
But JOHN was never immaculate.

As for the BEAU, he was duly tried,
When his wound was healed, at *Whitsuntide* ;

Served—for a day—as the last of ' sights,'
To the world of *St James's-Street* and "*White's*," 180

Went on his way to TYBURN TREE,
With a pomp befitting his high degree.

Every privilege rank confers :—
Bouquet of pinks at *St Sepulchre's* ;

Flagon of ale at *Holborn Bar* ;
 Friends (in mourning) to follow his Car—
 (' t ' is omitted where HEROES are !)

Every one knows the speech he made ;
 Swore that he " rather admired the Jade ! "—

Waved to the crowd with his gold-laced hat : 190
 Talked to the Chaplain after that ;

Turned to the Topsman undismayed . . .
 This was the finish of " BEAU BROCADE " !

*And this is the Ballad that seemed to hide
 In the leaves of a dusty " LONDONER'S GUIDE " ;*

*" Humbly Inscrib'd (with curls and tails)
 By the author, to FREDERICK, Prince of WALES :—*

*" Published by FRANCIS and OLIVER PINE ;
 Ludgate-Hill, at the Blackmoor Sign.
 Seventeen-Hundred-and-Forty-nine."*

200

AUSTIN DOBSON (1840-1921)

XIII
THE BALLAD OF DICK TURPIN

(i)

THE daylight moon looked quietly down
Through the gathering dusk on London
town.

A smock-frockt yokel hobbled along
By Newgate, humming a country song.

Chewing a straw, he stood to stare
At the proclamation posted there :

*Three hundred guineas on Turpin's head,
Trap him alive or shoot him dead ;
And a hundred more for his mate, Tom King.*

He crouched, like a tiger about to spring.

Then he looked up, and he looked down ;
And, chuckling low, like a country clown,

Dick Turpin painfully hobbled away
In quest of his Inn—*The Load of Hay.*

.

Alone in her stall, his mare, Black Bess,
Lifted her head in mute distress ;

For five strange men had entered the yard
And looked at her long, and looked at her hard.

They went out, muttering under their breath ;
And then—the dusk grew still as death. 20

But the velvet ears of the listening mare
Lifted and twitched. *They were there—still there ;*

Hidden and waiting ; for whom ? And why ?
The clock struck four. A step drew nigh.

It was King ! Tom King ! Dick Turpin's mate.
The black mare whinneyed. Too late ! Too late !

They rose like shadows out of the ground
And grappled him there, without a sound.

" Throttle him—quietly—choke him dead !
Or we lose the hawk for a jay," they said. 30

They wrestled and heaved, five men to one ;
And a yokel entered the yard, alone ;

A smock-frockt yokel, hobbling slow ;
But a fight is physic, as all men know.

His age dropped off. He stood upright.
He leapt like a tiger into the fight.

Hand to hand, they fought in the dark ;
For none could fire at a twisting mark,

Where he that shot at a foe might send
His pistol-ball through the skull of a friend. 40

150 TWENTY-TWO STORY POEMS

But "*Shoot, Dick, shoot!*" gasped out Tom King.
"*Shoot, or damn it, we both shall sing!*"

"*Shoot and chance it!*" Dick leapt back.
He drew. He fired. At the pistol's crack

The wrestlers whirled. They scattered apart,
And the bullet drilled through Tom King's heart.

Dick Turpin dropped his smoking gun.
They had trapped him now, five men to one.

A gun in each hand of the crouching five,
They could take Dick Turpin now, alive ;

Take him and bind him and tell their tale
As a pot-house boast, when they drank their ale.

He whistled, soft as a bird might call ;
And a head-rope snapped in his bird's dark stall.

He whistled, soft as a nightingale.
He heard the swish of her swinging tail.

There was no way out that the five could see,
To heaven or hell, but the Tyburn tree ;

No door but death ; and yet, once more,
He whistled, as though at a sweetheart's door.

The five men laughed at him, trapped alive ;
And—the door crashed open behind the five !

Out of the stable, a wave of thunder,
Swept Black Bess, and the five went under.

He leapt to the saddle. A hoof-spurned stone
Flashed blue fire, and their prize was gone.

(ii)

Away, through the ringing cobbled street, and out by the
Northern Gate,
He rode that night, like a ghost in flight, from the dogs of
his own fate.

By Crackskull Common, and Highgate Heath, he heard
the chase behind ;
But he rode to forget—forget—forget—the hounds of his 70
own mind.

And cherry-black Bess on the Enfield Road flew light as a
bird to her goal ;
But her Rider carried a heavier load, in his own struggling
soul.

He needed neither spur nor whip. He was borne on a
darker gale.
He rode like a hurricane-hunted ship, with the doom-
wind in her sail.

He rode for the one impossible thing ; that, in the
morning light,
The towers of York might waken him—from London, and
last night.

He rode to prove himself another, and leave himself
behind ;
And the hunted self was like a cloud ; but the hunter like
the wind.

Neck and neck they rode together ; that, in the day's
first gleam,
Each might prove that the other self was but a mocking so
dream.

And the little sleeping villages, and the breathless country-
side,
Woke to the drum of the racing hoofs ; but missed that
ghostly ride.

They did not hear, they did not see, as the drumming
hoofs drew nigh,
The dark magnificent thief in the night that rode so
subtly by.

They woke. They rushed to the wayside door. They saw
what the midnight showed,—
A mare that came like a crested wave along the Great
North Road ;

A flying spark in the formless dark, a flash from the hoof-
spurned stone,
And the lifted face of a Man, that took the star-light, and
was gone.

They heard the shout of the pounding chase, three
hundred yards away.
There were fourteen men in a steam of sweat and a 90
plaster of Midland clay.

The star-light struck their pistol-butts, as they passed in
 a clattering crowd,
*But the hunting wraith was away like the wind at the heels
 of the hunted cloud.*

He rode by the walls of Nottingham ; and, over him as
 he went,
 Like ghosts across the Great North Road, the boughs of
 Sherwood bent.

By Bawtrey all the chase but one had dropt a league
 behind,
 Yet that one Rider hunted him, invisibly, as the wind.

And northward, like a blacker night, he saw the moors
 up-loom,
 And Don and Derwent sang to him, like memory in the
 gloom,

And northward, northward as he rode, and sweeter than
 a prayer
 The voices of those hidden streams, the Trent and Ouse 100
 and Aire ;

Streams that could never slake his thirst. He heard them
 as they flowed.
 But one dumb Shadow hunted him along the Great North
 Road.

Till now, at dawn, the towers of York rose on the redden-
 ing sky,
 And Bess went down between his knees, like a breaking
 wave, to die.

He lay beside her in the ditch. He kissed her lovely
head ;

And a Shadow passed him like the wind, and left him
with his dead.

He saw, but not as one that wakes, the City that he
sought ;

He had escaped from London town, but not from his
own thought.

He strode up to the Mickle-gate with none to say him
nay ;

And there he met his Other Self, in the stranger light of 110
day.

He strode up to the dreadful Thing that in the gateway
stood ;

And it stretched out a ghostly hand that the dawn had
stained with blood.

It stood, as in the gates of hell, with none to hear or see.
“ *Welcome !* ” it said, “ *thou’st ridden well ; and outstript
all but me.* ”

ALFRED NOYES (b. 1880)

XIV
THE BURNING OF ROKEBY
BALLAD

(i)

AND whither would you lead me, then ?
Quoth the Friar of orders grey ;
And the Ruffians twain replied again,
“ By a dying woman to pray.”—

“ I see,” he said, “ a lovely sight,
A sight bodes little harm,
A lady as a lily bright,
With an infant on her arm.”—

“ Then do thine office, Friar grey,
And see thou shrive her free !
Else shall the sprite, that parts to-night,
Fling all its guilt on thee.

10

“ Let mass be said, and trentals read,
When thou’rt to convent gone,
And bid the bell of St Benedict
Toll out its deepest tone.”

The shrift is done, the Friar is gone,
Blindfolded as he came—
Next morning, all in Littlecot Hall
Were weeping for their dame.

20

Wild Darrell is an alter'd man,
The village crones can tell ;
He looks pale as clay, and strives to pray,
If he hears the convent bell.

If prince or peer cross Darrell's way,
He'll beard him in his pride—
If he meet a Friar of orders grey,
He droops and turns aside.

(ii)

" Harper ! methinks thy magic lays,"
Matilda said, " can goblins raise !
Wellnigh my fancy can discern,
Near the dark porch, a visage stern ;
E'en now, in yonder shadowy nook,
I see it !—Redmond, Wilfrid, look !—
A human form distinct and clear—
God, for thy mercy !—It draws near !"
She saw too true. Stride after stride,
The centre of that chamber wide
Fierce Bertram gain'd ; then made a stand,
And, proudly waving with his hand,
Thunder'd—" Be still, upon your lives !—
He bleeds who speaks, he dies who strives."
Behind their chief, the robber crew
Forth from the darken'd portal drew,
In silence—save that echo dread
Return'd their heavy measured tread.
The lamp's uncertain lustre gave
Their arms to gleam, their plumes to wave,
File after file in order pass,
Like forms on Banquo's mystic glass.

Then, halting at their leader's sign,
At once they form'd and curved their line.
Hemming within its crescent drear
Their victims, like a herd of deer.
Another sign, and to the aim
Levell'd at once their muskets came,
As waiting but their chieftain's word,
To make their fatal volley heard.

(iii)

Back in a heap the menials drew ;
Yet, even in mortal terror, true, 60
Their pale and startled group oppose
Between Matilda and the foes.
" O, haste thee, Wilfrid ! " Redmond cried ;
" Undo that wicket by thy side !
Bear hence Matilda—gain the wood—
The pass may be a while made good—
Thy band, ere this, must sure be nigh—
O speak not—dally not—but fly ! "
While yet the crowd their motions hide,
Through the low wicket door they glide. 70
Through vaulted passages they wind,
In Gothic intricacy twined ;
Wilfrid half led, and half he bore,
Matilda to the postern-door,
And safe beneath the forest tree,
The Lady stands at liberty.
The moonbeams, the fresh gale's caress,
Renew'd suspended consciousness ;—
" Where's Redmond ? " eagerly she cries :
" Thou answer'st not—he dies ! he dies ! 80
And thou hast left him, all bereft

Of mortal aid—with murderers left !
 I know it well—he would not yield
 His sword to man—his doom is seal'd !
 For my scorn'd life, which thou hast bought
 At price of his, I thank thee not."

(iv)

The unjust reproach, the angry look,
 The heart of Wilfrid could not brook,
 "Lady," he said, "my band so near,
 In safety thou mayst rest thee here.
 For Redmond's death thou shalt not mourn,
 If mine can buy his safe return."
 He turn'd away—his heart throbb'd high,
 The tear was bursting from his eye ;
 The sense of her injustice press'd
 Upon the Maid's distracted breast,—
 "Stay, Wilfrid, stay ! all aid is vain !"
 He heard, but turn'd him not again ;
 He reaches now the postern-door,
 Now enters—and is seen no more.

90

100

(v)

With all the agony that e'er
 Was gender'd 'twixt suspense and fear,
 She watch'd the line of windows tall,
 Whose Gothic lattice lights the Hall,
 Distinguish'd by the paly red
 The lamps in dim reflection shed,
 While all beside in wan moonlight
 Each grated casement glimmer'd white.
 No sight of harm, no sound of ill,

It is a deep and midnight still. 110
Who look'd upon the scene, had guess'd
All in the Castle were at rest :
When sudden on the windows shone
A lightning flash, just seen and gone !
A shot is heard—Again the flame
Flash'd thick and fast—a volley came !
Then echo'd wildly, from within,
Of shout and scream the mingled din.
And weapon-clash and maddening cry,
Of those who kill, and those who die !— 120
As fill'd the Hall with sulphurous smoke,
More red, more dark, the death-flash broke ;
And forms were on the lattice cast,
That struck or struggled, as they past.

(vi)

What sounds upon the midnight wind
Approach so rapidly behind ?
It is, it is the tramp of steeds,
Matilda hears the sound, she speeds,
Seizes upon the leader's rein—
“ O, haste to aid, ere aid be vain ! 130
Fly to the postern—gain the Hall ! ”
From saddle spring the troopers all ;
Their gallant steeds, at liberty,
Run wild along the moonlight lea.
But, ere they burst upon the scene,
Full stubborn had the conflict been.
When Bertram mark'd Matilda's flight,
It gave the signal for the fight ;
And Rokeby's veterans, seam'd with scars
Of Scotland's and of Erin's wars, 140

160 TWENTY-TWO STORY POEMS

Their momentary panic o'er,
 Stood to the arms which then they bore ;
 (For they were weapon'd, and prepared
 Their Mistress on his way to guard.)
 Then cheer'd them to the fight O'Neale,
 Then peal'd the shot, and clash'd the steel ;
 The war-smoke soon with sable breath
 Darken'd the scene of blood and death,
 While on the few defenders close
 The Bandits, with redoubled blows,
 And, twice driven back, yet fierce and fell
 Renew the charge with frantic yell.

150

(vii)

Wilfrid has fall'n—but o'er him stood
 Young Redmond, soil'd with smoke and blood.
 Cheering his mates with heart and hand
 Still to make good their desperate stand.
 "Up, comrades, up ! In Rokeby halls
 Ne'er be it said our courage falls.
 What ! faint ye for their savage cry,
 Or do the smoke-wreaths daunt your eye ?
 These rafters have return'd a shout
 As loud at Rokeby's wassail rout,
 As thick a smoke these hearths have given
 At Hallow-tide or Christmas-even.
 Stand to it yet ! renew the fight,
 For Rokeby's and Matilda's right !
 These slaves ! they dare not, hand to hand,
 Bide buffet from a true man's brand."
 Impetuous, active, fierce, and young,
 Upon the advancing foes he sprung.
 Woe to the wretch at whom is bent

160

170

His brandish'd falchion's sheer descent !
Backward they scatter'd as he came,
Like wolves before the levin flame,
When, mid their howling conclave driven,
Hath glanced the thunderbolt of heaven.
Bertram rush'd on—but Harpool clasp'd,
His knees, although in death he gasp'd,
His falling corpse before him flung,
And round the trammell'd ruffian clung. 180
Just then, the soldiers filled the dome,
And, shouting, charged the felons home
So fiercely, that in panic dread,
They broke, they yielded, fell, or fled,
Bertram's stern voice they heed no more,
Though heard above the battle's roar ;
While, trampling down the dying man,
He strove, with volley'd threat and ban,
In scorn of odds, in fate's despite,
To rally up the desperate fight. 190

(viii)

Soon murkier clouds the Hall enfold,
Than e'er from battle-thunders roll'd !
So dense, the combatants scarce know
To aim or to avoid the blow.
Smothering and blindfold grows the fight—
But soon shall dawn a dismal light !
Mid cries, and clashing arms, there came
The hollow sound of rushing flame ;
New horrors on the tumult dire
Arise—the Castle is on fire ! 200
Doubtful, if chance had cast the brand,
Or frantic Bertram's desperate hand.

Matilda saw—for frequent broke
 From the dim casements gusts of smoke.
 Yon tower, which late so clear defined
 On the fair hemisphere reclined,
 That, pencill'd on its azure pure,
 The eye could count each embrazure,
 Now, swath'd within the sweeping cloud,
 Seems giant-spectre in his shroud ;
 Till, from each loop-hole flashing light,
 A spout of fire shines ruddy bright,
 And, gathering to united glare,
 Streams high into the midnight air ;
 A dismal beacon, far and wide
 That waken'd Greta's slumbering side.
 Soon all beneath, through gallery long,
 And pendant arch, the fire flash'd strong,
 Snatching whatever could maintain,
 Raise, or extend, its furious reign ;
 Startling, with closer cause of dread,
 The females who the conflict fled,
 And now rush'd forth upon the plain,
 Filling the air with clamours vain.

210

220

(ix)

But ceased not yet, the Hall within,
 The shriek, the shout, the carnage-din,
 Till bursting lattices give proof
 The flames have caught the rafter'd roof.
 What ! wait they till its beams amain
 Crash on the slayers and the slain ?
 The alarm is caught—the drawbridge falls,
 The warriors hurry from the walls,

230

But, by the conflagration's light,
Upon the lawn renew the fight.
Each straggling felon down was hew'd,
Not one could gain the sheltering wood ;
But forth the affrighted harper sprung,
And to Matilda's robe he clung.
Her shriek, entreaty, and command,
Stopp'd the pursuer's lifted hand.
Denzil and he alive were ta'en ;
The rest, save Bertram, all are slain.

240

(x)

And where is Bertram ?—Soaring high,
The general flame ascends the sky ;
In gather'd group the soldiers gaze
Upon the broad and roaring blaze,
When, like infernal demon, sent
Red from his penal element,
To plague and to pollute the air—
His face all gore, on fire his hair,
Forth from the central mass of smoke
The giant form of Bertram broke !
His brandish'd sword on high he rears,
Then plunged among opposing spears ;
Round his left arm his mantle truss'd,
Received and foil'd three lances' thrust ;
Nor these his headlong course withstood,
Like reeds he snapp'd the tough ash-wood.
In vain his foes around him clung ;
With matchless force aside he flung
Their boldest,—as the bull, at bay,
Tosses the ban-dogs from his way,

250

260

164 TWENTY-TWO STORY POEMS

Through forty foes his path he made,
And safely gain'd the forest glade.

(xi)

Scarce was this final conflict o'er,
When from the postern Redmond bore
Wilfrid, who, as of life bereft,
Had in the fatal Hall been left.
Deserted there by all his train ;
But Redmond saw, and turn'd again,—
Beneath an oak he laid him down,
That in the blaze gleam'd ruddy brown,
And then his mantle's clasp undid ;
Matilda held his drooping head,
Till, given to breathe the freer air,
Returning life repaid their care.
He gazed on them with heavy sigh,—
" I could have wish'd even thus to die ! "
No more he said—for now with speed
Each trooper had regain'd his steed ;
The ready palfreys stood array'd,
For Redmond and for Rokeby's Maid ;
Two Wilfrid on his horse sustain,
One leads his charger by the rein.
But oft Matilda look'd behind,
As up the Vale of Tees they wind,
Where far the mansion of her sires
Beacon'd the dale with midnight fires.
In gloomy arch above them spread,
The clouded heaven lower'd bloody red :
Beneath, in sombre light, the flood
Appear'd to roll in waves of blood.

270

280

290

Then, one by one, was heard to fall
The tower, the donjon-keep, the hall.
Each rushing down with thunder sound,
A space the conflagration drown'd ;
Till, gathering strength, again it rose,
Announced its triumph in its close,
Shook wide its light the landscape o'er,
Then sunk—and Rokeby was no more !

300

SIR WALTER SCOTT (1771-1832)

Rokeby, Canto V, xxvii-xxxvii

XV
TAM O' SHANTER

Of Brownie and of Bogillie full is this Buke.
GAWIN DOUGLAS

WHEN chapman billies leave the street,
And drouthy neibors neibors meet ;
As market-days are wearing late,
And folk begin to tak the gate,
While we sit bousing at the nappy,
An' getting fou and unco happy,
We think na on the lang Scots miles,
The mosses, waters, slaps and stiles,
That lie between us and our hame,
Where sits our sulky, sullen dame,
Gathering her brows like gathering storm,
Nursing her wrath to keep it warm.

10

This truth fand honest TAM O' SHANTER,
As he frae Ayr ae night did canter :
(Auld Ayr, wham ne'er a town surpasses,
For honest men and bonnie lasses.)

O Tam ! had'st thou but been sae wise,
As taen thy ain wife Kate's advice !
She tauld thee weel thou was a skellum,
A blethering, blustering, drunken blellum ;

20

1. *chapman billies*, pedlar fellows. 2. *drouthy*, thirsty. 4. *gate*, way. 5. *nappy*, ale. 8. *slaps*, openings in walls, etc. 19. *skellum*, rascal. 20. *blellum*, babblers.

That frae November till October,
 Ae market-day thou was na sober ;
 That ilka melder wi' the Miller,
 Thou sat as lang as thou had siller ;
 That ev'ry naig was ca'd a shoe on
 The Smith and thee gat roarin fou on ;
 That at the Lord's house, ev'n on Sunday,
 Thou drank wi' Kirkton Jean till Monday ;
 She prophesied that late or soon,
 Thou wad be found, deep drown'd in Doon, 30
 Or catch'd wi' warlocks in the mirk,
 By Alloway's auld, haunted kirk.

Ah, gentle dames ! it gars me greet,
 To think how mony counsels sweet,
 How mony lengthen'd, sage advices,
 The husband frae the wife despises !

But to our tale :—Ae market night,
 Tam had got planted unco right,
 Fast by an ingle, bleezing finely,
 Wi' reaming swats that drank divinely ; 40
 And at his elbow, Souter Johnie,
 His ancient, trusty, drouthy crony :
 Tam lo'ed him like a very brither ;
 They had been fou for weeks thegither.
 The night drave on wi' sangs an' clatter ;
 And aye the ale was growing better :
 The Landlady and Tam grew gracious,
 Wi' favours secret, sweet and precious :

23. *ilka melder*, each corn-grinding. 25. *ca'd*, driven. 33. *gars me greet*, makes me weep. 40. *reaming swats*, frothing ale. 41. *souter*, cobbler.

TWENTY-TWO STORY POEMS

The Souter tauld his queerest stories ;
 The Landlord's laugh was ready chorus :
 The storm without might rair and rustle,
 Tam did na mind the storm a whistle.

Care, mad to see a man sae happy,
 E'en drowned himsel' amang the nappy.
 As bees flee hame wi' lades o' treasure,
 The minutes wing'd their way wi' pleasure :
 Kings may be blest, but Tam was glorious,
 O'er a' the ills o' life victorious !

But pleasures are like poppies spread,
 You seize the flow'r, its bloom is shed ;
 Or like the snow falls in the river,
 A moment white—then melts for ever ;
 Or like the Borealis race,
 That flit ere you can point their place ;
 Or like the Rainbow's lovely form
 Evanishing amid the storm.—
 Nae man can tether Time nor Tide,
 The hour approaches, Tam maun ride ;
 That hour, o' night's black arch the key-stane,
 That dreary hour he mounts his beast in ;
 And sic a night he tak's the road in,
 As ne'er poor sinner was abroad in.

The wind blew as 'twad blawn its last ;
 The rattling showers rose on the blast ;
 The speedy gleams the darkness swallow'd :
 Loud, deep, and lang the thunder bellow'd :
 That night, a child might understand,
 The deil had business on his hand.

Weel-mounted on his grey mare Meg,
A better never lifted leg, 80
Tam skelpit on thro' dub and mire,
Despising wind, and rain, and fire ;
Whiles holding fast his gude blue bonnet,
Whiles crooning o'er some auld Scots sonnet,
Whiles glow'rin round wi' prudent cares,
Lest bogles catch him unawares ;
Kirk-Alloway was drawing nigh,
Where ghaists and houlets nightly cry.

By this time he was cross the ford,
Where in the snaw the chapman smoor'd ; 90
And past the birks and meikle stane,
Where drunken Charlie brak's neck-bane ;
And thro' the whins, and by the cairn,
Where hunters fand the murder'd bairn ;
And near the thorn, aboon the well,
Where Mungo's mither hang'd hersel'.
Before him Doon pours all his floods,
The doubling storm roars thro' the woods,
The lightnings flash from pole to pole, 100
Near and more near the thunders roll,
When, glimmering thro' the groaning trees,
Kirk-Alloway seem'd in a bleeze,
Thro' ilka bore the beams were glancing,
And loud resounded mirth and dancing.

Inspiring bold John Barleycorn !
What dangers thou canst make us scorn !

81. *skelpit*, hurried. 86. *bogles*, hobgoblins. 88. *houlets*, owls.
90. *smoor'd*, smothered. 91. *birks*, birch-trees. 93. *whins*, furze-
bushes. 103. *bore*, hole.

Wi' tippenny, we fear nae evil ;
 Wi' usquabae, we'll face the devil !
 The swats sae ream'd in Tammie's noddle,
 Fair play, he car'd na deils a boddle, 110
 But Maggie stood, right sair astonish'd,
 Till, by the heel and hand admonish'd,
 She ventur'd forward on the light ;
 And, wow ! Tam saw an unco sight !

Warlocks and witches in a dance :
 Nae cotillon, brent new frae France,
 But hornpipes, jigs, strathspeys, and reels,
 Put life and mettle in their heels.
 A winnock-bunker in the east,
 There sat auld Nick, in shape o' beast ; 120
 A tousie tyke, black, grim, and large,
 To gie them music was his charge :
 He screw'd the pipes and gart them skirl,
 Till roof and rafters a' did dirl.—
 Coffins stood round, like open presses,
 That shaw'd the Dead in their last dresses ;
 And (by some devilish cantraip sleight)
 Each in its cauld hand held a light.
 By which heroic Tam was able
 To note upon the haly table, 130
 A murderer's bane, in gibbet-airns ;
 Twa span-lang, wee, unchristened bairns ;
 A thief, new-cutted frae a rape,
 Wi' his last gasp his gab did gape ;

108. *usquabae*, whisky 110 *boddle*, twopence (Scots). 116.
brent new, brand new. 119. *winnock-bunker*, a window seat. 121.
tousie, shaggy. 123. *gart*, made. *skirl*, scream. 124. *dirl*, rattle.
 127. *cantraip*, magic. 131. *airns*, irons. 133. *rape*, rope. 134.
gab, mouth.

Five tomahawks, wi' blude red-rusted ;
 Five scimitars, wi' murder crusted ;
 A garter which a babe had strangled ;
 A knife, a father's throat had mangled,
 Whom his ain son of life bereft,
 The grey hairs yet stack to the heft ; 140
 Wi' mair of horrible and awfu',
 Which even to name wad be unlawfu'.

As Tammie glowr'd, amaz'd and curious,
 The mirth and fun grew fast and furious ;
 The Piper loud and louder blew,
 The dancers quick and quicker flew,
 They reel'd, they set, they cross'd, they cleekit,
 Till ilka carlin swat and reekit,
 And coost her duddies to the wark,
 And linkit at it in her sark ! 150

Now Tam, O Tam ! had they been queans,
 A' plump and strapping in their teens !
 Their sarks, instead o' creeshie flainen,
 Been snaw-white seventeen-hunder linen !—
 Thir breeks o' mine, my only pair,
 That aince were plush, o' guid blue hair,
 I wad hae gien them off my hurdies,
 For ae blink o' the bonnie burdies !
 But wither'd beldams, auld and droll,
 Rigwoodie hags wad spean a foal, 160

147. *cleekit*, joined hands. 148. *carlin*, old woman. 149. *coost*, threw off. *duddies*, rags. 150. *linkit*, tripped quickly. *sark*, shirt. 151. *queans*, girls. 153. *creeshie flainen*, greasy flannel. 155. *breeks*, breeches. 157. *hurdies*, legs. 158. *burdies*, lassies. 160. *rigwoodie*, lean. *spean*, wean.

Louping an' flinging on a crummock,
I wonder did na turn thy stomach.

But Tam kent what was what fu' brawlie :
There was ae winsome wench and waulie
That night enlisted in the core,
Lang after ken'd on Carrick shore
(For mony a beast to dead she shot,
And perish'd mony a bonie boat,
An shook baith meikle corn and bear,
And kept the country-side in fear) ;
Her cutty sark, o' Paisley harn,
That while a lassie she had worn,
In longitude tho' sorely scanty,
It was her best, and she was vauntie.
Ah ! little ken'd thy reverend grannie,
That sark she coft for her wee Nannie,
Wi' twa pund Scots ('twas a' her riches),
Wad ever grac'd a dance of witches !

170

But here my Muse her wing maun cour'
Sic flights are far beyond her power ;
To sing how Nannie lap and flang
(A souple jade she was and strang),
And how Tam stood, like aye bewitch'd,
And thought his very een enrich'd :
Even Satan glowr'd, and fidg'd fu' fain,
And hotch'd and blew wi' might and main :
Till first ae caper, syne anither,
Tam tint his reason a' thegither,

180

161. *crummock*, staff. 164. *waulie*, jolly. 169. *bear*, barley.
171. *cutty sark*, short shirt. *harn*, coarse cloth. 174. *vauntie*,
proud. 176. *coft*, bought. 186. *hotch'd*, jerked. 188. *tint*, lost.

And roars out, " Weel done, Cutty-sark ! "
 And in an instant all was dark :
 And scarcely had he Maggie rallied,
 When out the hellish legion sallied.

190

As bees bizz out wi' angry fyke,
 When plundering herds assail their byke ;
 As open pussie's mortal foes,
 When, pop ! she starts before their nose ;
 As eager runs the market-crowd,
 When " Catch the thief ! " resounds aloud ;
 So Maggie runs, the witches follow,
 Wi' mony an eldritch skreich and hollo.

200

Ah, Tam ! Ah, Tam ! thou'll get thy fairin
 In hell they'll roast thee like a herrin !
 In vain thy Kate awaits thy comin !
 Kate soon will be a woefu' woman !
 Now, do thy speedy utmost, Meg,
 And win the key-stane o' the brig ;
 There, at them thou thy tail may toss,
 A running stream they dare na cross,
 But ere the key-stane she could make,
 The fient a tail she had to shake !
 For Nannie, far before the rest,
 Hard upon noble Maggie prest,
 And flew at Tam wi' furious ettle ;
 But little wist she Maggie's mettle !
 Ae spring brought off her master hale,
 But left behind her ain grey tail :

210

193. *fyke*, bustle. 194. *byke*, hive. 200. *eldritch skreich*, un-
 earthly scream. 201. *fairin*, reward. 210. *fient*, devil. 213.
ettle, intent.

174 TWENTY-TWO STORY POEMS

The carlin caught her by the rump,
And left poor Maggie scarce a stump.

Now, wha this tale o' truth shall read,
Ilk man, and mother's son, take heed :
Whene'er to Drink you are inclin'd,
Or Cutty-sarks rin in your mind,
Think ye may buy the joys o'er dear ;
Remember Tam o' Shanter's mare.

220

ROBERT BURNS (1759-96)

XVI

EDWARD III AND THE WANDERERS

SO it befell that we no sail had seen
 Still the sixth day at morn, when we drew near
 The land at last and saw the French coast clear,—
 The high land over Guines our pilot said.
 There at the day-break, we, apparelled
 Like merchant ships in seeming, now perforce
 Must meet a navy drawing thwart our course,
 Whose sails and painted hulls not far away
 Rolled slowly o'er the leaden sea and grey,
 Beneath the night-clouds by no sun yet cleared ;
 But we with anxious hearts this navy neared,
 For we sailed deep and heavy, and to fly
 Would nought avail since we were drawn so nigh,
 And fighting, must we meet but certain death.

10

Soon with amazement did I hold my breath
 As from the wide bows of the Rose-Garland,
 I saw the sun, new risen o'er the land,
 Light up the shield-hung side of keel on keel,
 Their sails like knights' coats, and the points of steel
 Glittering from waist and castle and high top.
 And well indeed awhile my heart might stop
 As heading all the crowded van I saw,
 Huge, swelling out without a crease or flaw,
 A sail where, on the quartered blue and red,
 In silk and gold right well apparelled,
 The lilies gleamed, the thin gaunt leopards glared
 Out toward the land where even now there flared

20

The dying beacons. Ah, with such an one
 Could I from town to town of France have run
 To end my life upon some glorious day 30
 Where stand the banners brighter than the May
 Above the deeds of men, as certainly
 This king himself has full oft wished to die.

And who knows now beneath what field he lies,
 Amidst what mighty bones of enemies ?
 Ah, surely it had been a glorious thing
 From such a field to lead forth such a king,
 That he might live again with happy days,
 And more than ever win the people's praise.
 Nor had it been an evil lot to stand 40
 On the worse side, with people of the land
 'Gainst such a man, when even this might fall,
 That it might be my luck some day to call
 My battle-cry o'er his low-lying head,
 And I be evermore remembered.

Well as we neared and neared, such thoughts I had
 Whereby perchance I was the less a-drud
 Of what might come, and at the worst we deemed
 They would not scorn our swords ; but as I dreamed
 Of fair towns won and desperate feats of war, 50
 And my old follies now were driven afar
 By that most glorious sight, a loud halloo
 Came down the wind, and one by me who knew
 The English tongue cried that they bade us run
 Close up and board, nor was there any one
 Who durst say nay to that, so presently
 Both keels were underneath the big ship's lee ;
 While Nicholas and I together passed
 Betwixt the crowd of archers by the mast
 Unto the poop, where 'neath his canopy
 The king sat, eyeing us as we drew nigh. 60

Broad-browed he was, hook-nosed, with wide grey eyes
 No longer eager for the coming prize,
 But keen and steadfast, many an ageing line,
 Half hidden by his sweeping beard and fine,
 Ploughed his thin cheeks, his hair was more than grey,
 And like to one he seemed whose better day
 Is over to himself, though foolish fame
 Shouts louder year by year his empty name.
 Unarmed he was, nor clad upon that morn 70
 Much like a king, an ivory hunting-horn
 Was slung about him, rich with gems and gold,
 And a great white ger-falcon did he hold
 Upon his fist ; before his feet there sat
 A scrivener making notes of this or that
 As the king bade him, and behind his chair
 His captains stood in armour rich and fair ;
 And by his side unhelmed, but armed, stood one
 I deemed none other than the prince his son ;
 For in a coat of England was he clad, 80
 And on his head a coronel he had.
 Tall was he, slim, made apt for feats of war,
 A splendid lord, yea, he seemed prouder far
 Than was his sire, yet his eyes therewithal
 With languid careless glance seemed wont to fall
 On things about, as though he deemed that nought
 Could fail unbidden to do all his thought.
 But close by him stood a war-beaten knight,
 Whose coat of war bore on a field of white
 A sharp red pile, and he of all men there 90
 Methought would be the one that I should fear
 If I led men.

But midst my thoughts I heard
 The king's voice as the high seat now we neared,
 And knew his speech because in French it was,

That erewhile I had learnt of Nicholas.

"Fair sirs, what are ye? for on this one day,

I rule the narrow seas mine ancient way.

Me seemeth in the highest bark I know

The Flemish handiwork, but yet ye show

Unlike to merchants, though your ships are deep

100

And slowly through the water do ye creep;

And thou, fair sir, seem'st journeying from the north

With peltries Bordeaux-ward? Nay then go forth,

Thou wilt not harm us: yet if ye be men

Well-born and warlike, these are fair days, when

The good heart wins more than the merchant keeps,

And safest still in steel the young head sleeps;

And here are banners thou mayest stand beneath

And not be shamed either in life or death—

What, man, thou reddenest, wouldst thou say me no,

110

If underneath my banner thou shouldst go?

Nay, thou mayest speak, or let thy fellow say

What he is stuffed with, be it yea or nay."

For as he spoke my fellow gazed on me

With something like to fear, and hurriedly

As I bent forward, thrust me on one side,

And scarce the king's last word would he abide

But 'gan to say, "Sire, from the north we come,

Though as for me far nigher is my home.

Thy foes, my Lord, drove out my kin and me,

120

Ere yet this armed hand was upon the sea;

Chandos all surely know my father's name,

Loys of Jinan, which ill-luck, sword, and flame,

Lord Charles of Blois, the French king, and the pest

In this and that land now have laid to rest,

Except for me alone. And now, my Lord,

If I shall seem to speak an idle word

To such as thou art, pardon me therefore;

But we, part taught by ancient books and lore,
 And part by what, nor yet so long ago, 130
 This man's own countrymen have come to do,
 Have gathered hope to find across the sea
 A land where we shall gain felicity
 Past tongue of man to tell of ; and our life
 Is not so sweet here, or so free from strife,
 Or glorious deeds so common, that, if we
 Should think a certain path at last to see
 To such a place, men then could think us wise
 To turn away therefrom, and shut our eyes,
 Because at many a turning here and there 140
 Swift death might lurk, or unaccustomed fear.
 O King, I pray thee in this young man's face
 Flash not thy banner, nor with thy frank grace
 Tear him from life ; but go thy way, let us
 Find hidden death, or life more glorious
 Than thou durst think of, knowing not the gate
 Whereby to flee from that all-shadowing fate.

" O King, since I could walk a yard or twain
 Or utter anything but cries of pain,
 Death was before me ; yea, on the first morn 150
 That I remember aught, among the corn
 I wandered with my nurse, behind us lay
 The walls of Vannes, white in the summer day,
 The reapers whistled, the brown maidens sung,
 As on the wain the topmost sheaf they hung,
 The swallow wheeled above high up in air,
 And midst the labour all was sweet and fair ;
 When on the winding road between the fields
 I saw a glittering line of spears and shields,
 And pleased therewith called out to some one by 160
 E'en as I could ; he scarce for fear could cry
 ' The French, the French ! ' and turned and ran his best

Toward the town gates, and we ran with the rest,
 I wailing loud who knew not why at all,
 But ere we reached the gates my nurse did fall,
 I with her, and I wondered much that she
 Just as she fell should still lie quietly ;
 Nor did the coloured feathers that I found
 Stuck in her side, as frightened I crawled round,
 Tell me the tale, though I was sore afeard
 At all the cries and wailing that I heard.

170

" I say, my Lord, that arrow-flight now seems
 The first thing rising clear from feeble dreams,
 And that was death ; and the next thing was death,
 For through our house all spoke with bated breath
 And wore black clothes, withal they came to me
 A little child, and did off hastily
 My shoon and hosen, and with that I heard
 The sound of doleful singing, and afeard
 Forbore to question, when I saw the feet
 Of all were bare, like mine, as toward the street
 We passed, and joined a crowd in such-like guise,
 Who through the town sang woeful litanies,
 Pressing the stones with feet unused and soft,
 And bearing images of saints aloft,
 In hope 'gainst hope to save us from the rage
 Of that fell pest, that as an unseen cage
 Hemmed France about, and me and such as me
 They made partakers of their misery.

180

" Lo death again, and if the time served now
 Full many another picture could I show
 Of death and death, and men who ever strive
 Through every misery at least to live.
 The priest within the minster preaches it,
 And brooding o'er it doth the wise man sit
 Letting life's joys go by. Well, blame me then,

190

If I who love this changing life of men,
 And ev'ry minute of whose life were bliss
 Too great to long for greater, but for this—
 Mock me, who take this death-bound life in hand 200
 And risk the rag to find a happy land,
 Where at the worst death is so far away
 No man need think of him from day to day—
 Mock me, but let us go, for I am fain
 Our restless road, the landless sea, to gain.”

His words nigh made me weep, but while he spoke
 I noted how a mocking smile just broke
 The thin line of the Prince's lips, and he
 Who carried the afore-named armoury
 Puffed out his wind-beat cheeks and whistled low : 210
 But the king smiled, and said, “ Can it be so ?
 I know not, and ye twain are such as find
 The things whereto old kings must needs be blind.
 For you the world is wide—but not for me,
 Who once had dreams of one great victory
 Wherein that world lay vanquished by my throne,
 And now, the victor in so many an one,
 Find that in Asia Alexander died
 And will not live again ; the world is wide
 For you I say,—for me a narrow space 220
 Betwixt the four walls of a fighting place.

“ Poor man, why should I stay thee ? live thy fill,
 Of that fair life, whercin thou seest no ill
 But fear of that fair rest I hope to win
 One day, when I have purged me of my sin.

“ Farewell, it yet may hap that I a king
 Shall be remembered but by this one thing,
 That on the morn before ye crossed the sea
 Ye gave and took in common talk with me ;

But with this ring keep memory of the morn,
O Breton, and thou Northman, by this horn
Remember me, who am of Odin's blood,
As heralds say : moreover it were good
Ye had some lines of writing 'neath my seal,
Or ye might find it somewhat hard to deal
With some of mine, who pass not for a word
Whate'er they deem may hold a hostile sword." 230

So as we kneeled this royal man to thank,
A clerk brought forth two passes sealed and blank,
And when we had them, with the horn and ring, 240
With few words did we leave the noble king,
And as adown the gangway steps we passed,
We saw the yards swing creaking round the mast,
And heard the shipman's ho, for one by one
The van outsailed before, by him had run
E'en as he stayed for us, and now indeed
Of his main battle must he take good heed :
But as from off the mighty side we pushed,
And in between us the green water rushed,
I heard his scalds strike up triumphantly 250
Some song that told not of the weary sea,
But rather of the mead and fair green-wood,
And as we leaned o'er to the wind, I stood
And saw the bright sails leave us, and soon lost
The pensive music by the strong wind tossed
From wave to wave, then turning I espied
Glittering and white upon the weather side
The land he came from, o'er the bright green sea,
Scarce duller than the land upon our lee,
For now the clouds had fled before the sun 260
And the bright autumn day was well begun.
Then I cried out for music too, and heard

The minstrels sing some well-remembered word,
And while they sung, before me still I gazed,
Silent with thought of many things, and mazed
With many longings ; when I looked again
To see those lands, nought but the restless plain
With some far-off small fisher-boat was left ;
A little hour for evermore had reft
The sight of Europe from my helpless eyes,
And crowned my store of hapless memories.

270

WILLIAM MORRIS (1834-96)

XVII

THE CRUISE OF THE "ROVER," A.D. 1575

(i)

THEY sailed away one morning when sowing-time
was over,
In long red fields above the sea they left the sleeping
wheat ;
Twice twenty men of Devonshire, who manned their ship
the *Rover*,
Below the little busy town where all the schooners meet.

(ii)

Their sweethearts came and waved to them, and filled
with noise of laughter
The echoing port below the cliff where thirty craft can
ride.
Each lad cried out, " Farewell to thee ! " the captain
shouted after,
" By God's help we'll be back again before the harvest-
tide."

(iii)

They turned the Start and slipped along with speedy
wind and weather ;
Passed white Terceira's battlements, and, close upon 10
the line,
Ran down a little carrack full of cloth and silk and leather,
And golden Popish images and good Madeira wine.

(iv)

The crew with tears and curses went tacking back to
 Flores ;
 The English forty cut the seas where none before had
 been,
 And spent the sultry purple nights in English songs, and
 stories
 Of England, and her soldiers, and her Spaniard-hating
 queen.

(v)

At last the trade-wind caught them, the pale sharks reeled
 before them,
 The little *Rover* shot ahead across the western seas ;
 All night the larger compass of a tropic sky passed o'er
 them,
 Till they won the Mexique waters through a strait of 20
 banyan-trees.

(vi)

And there good luck befell them, for divers times they
 sighted
 The sails of Spanish merchantmen bound homeward
 with their wares ;
 And twice they failed to follow them, and once they
 stopped benighted ;
 But thrice the flag of truce flew out, and the scented
 prize was theirs.

(vii)

But midsummer was on them, with close-reef gales and
 thunder,
 Their heavy vessel wallowed beneath her weight of
 gold ;

A long highway of ocean kept them and home asunder,
 So back they turned towards England with a richly-
 laden hold.

(viii)

But just outside Tampico a man-of-war was riding,
 And all the mad young English blood in forty brains 30
 awoke,
 The *Rover* chased the monster, and swiftly shorewards
 gliding,
 Dipped down beneath the cannonade that o'er her
 bulwarks broke.

(ix)

Three several days they fought her, and pressed her till
 she grounded
 On the sandy isle of Carmen, where milky palm-trees
 grow ;
 Whereat she waved an ensign, a peaceful trumpet
 sounded,
 And all the Spaniards cried for truce, surrendering in
 a row.

(x)

Alas the wiles and jesuitries of scoundrel-hearted Spaniards,
 The scarlet woman dyes their hands in deeper red than
 hers,
 For every scrap of white that decked their tackling and
 their lanyards
 Just proved them sly like devils and cowardly like 40
 curs.

(xi)

For out from countless coverts, from low palm-shaded
 islands,
 That fledged in seeming innocence the smooth and
 shining main,
 The pinnaces came gliding and hemmed them round in
 silence,
 All manned with Indian bravos and whiskered dogs of
 Spain.

(xii)

Our captain darted forwards, his fair hair streamed behind
 him,
 He shouted in his cheery voice, " For home and for the
 Queen ! "
 Three times he waved his gallant sword, but the flashes
 seemed to blind him,
 And a hard look came across his mouth where late a
 smile had been.

(xiii)

We levelled with our muskets, and the foremost boat
 went under,
 The ship's boy seized a trumpet and blew a merry 50
 blast ;
 The Spanish rats held off a while, and gazed at us in
 wonder,
 But the hindmost pushed the foremost on, and boarded
 us at last.

(xiv)

They climbed the larboard quarter with their hatchets and
 their sabres ;
 The Devon lads shot fast and hard, and sank their
 second boat,

But the Popish hordes were legion, and Hercules his
labours
Are light beside the task to keep a riddled barque
afloat.

(xv)

And twenty men had fallen, and the *Rover's* deck was
reeling,
And the brave young captain died in shouting loud,
"Elizabeth!"
The Spaniards dragged the rest away just while the ship
was heeling,
Lest she should sink and rob them of her sailors' tor- 60
tured breath.

(xvi)

For they destined them to perish in a slow and cruel
slaughter,
A feast for monks and Jesuits too exquisite to lose;
So they caught the English sailors as they leaped into the
water,
And a troop of horse as convoy brought them north to
Vera Cruz.

(xvii)

They led them up a sparkling beach of burning sand and
coral,
They dragged the brave young Englishmen like hounds
within a leash;
They passed beneath an open wood of leaves that smelt
of laurel,
Bound close together, each to each, with cords that cut
the flesh.

(xviii)

And miles and miles along the coast they tramped beneath
 no cover,
 Till in their mouths each rattling tongue was like a 70
 hard dry seed,
 And ere they came to Vera Cruz when that long day was
 over,
 The coral cut their shoes to rags, and made them wince
 and bleed.

(xix)

Then as they clambered up the town, the jeering crowd
 grew thicker,
 And laughed to see their swollen feet and figures marred
 and bent,
 And women with their hair unloosed stood underneath
 the flicker
 Of torch and swinging lantern, and cursed them as they
 went.

(xx)

And three men died of weariness before they reached the
 prison,
 And one fell shrieking with the pain of a poniard in the
 back,
 And when dawn broke in the morning three other souls
 had risen
 To bear the dear Lord witness of the hellish Spaniard 80
 pack.

(xxi)

But the monks girt up their garments, the friars bound
 their sandals,
 They hurried to the market-place with faggots of dry
 wood,

And the acolytes came singing, with their incense and
 their candles,
 To offer to their images a sacrifice of blood.

(xxii)

But they sent the leech to tend them, with his pouch and
 his long phial,
 And the Jesuits came smiling, with honied words at
 first,
 For they dared not burn the heretics without some show
 of trial,
 And the English lads were dying of poisoned air and
 thirst.

(xxiii)

So they gave them draughts of water from a great cold
 earthen firkin,
 And brought them to the courtyard where the tall 90
 hidalgo sat,
 And he looked a gallant fellow in his boots and his rough
 jerkin,
 With the jewels on his fingers, and the feather in his hat.

(xxiv)

And he spoke out like a soldier, for he said, " Ye caught
 them fighting,
 They met you with the musket, by the musket they
 shall fall.
 They are Christians in some fashion, and the pile you're
 bent on lighting
 Shall blaze with none but Indians, or it shall not blaze
 at all."

(xxv)

So they led them to a clearing in the wood outside the
 city,
 Struck off the gyves that bound them, and freed each
 crippled hand,
 And dark-eyed women clustered round and murmured in
 their pity,
 But won no glance nor answer from the steadfast 100
 English band.

(xxvi)

For their lives rose up before them in crystalline com-
 pleteness,
 And they lost the flashing soldiery, the sable horde of
 Rome,
 And the great magnolias round them, with wave on wave
 of sweetness,
 Seemed just the fresh profusion and hawthorn lanes of
 home.

(xxvii)

They thought about the harvests, and wondered who
 would reap them ;
 They thought about the little port where thirty craft
 can ride ;
 They thought about their sweethearts, and prayed the
 Lord to keep them ;
 Then kissed each other silently, and hand in hand
 they died.

SIR EDMUND GOSSE (1849-1928)

XVIII
THE ADMIRAL'S GHOST

I TELL you a tale to-night
Which a seaman told to me,
With eyes that gleamed in the lanthorn light
And a voice as low as the sea.

You could almost hear the stars
Twinkling up in the sky,
And the old wind woke and moaned in the spars,
And the same old waves went by,

Singing the same old song
As ages and ages ago,
While he froze my blood in that deep-sea night
With the things that he seemed to know.

A bare foot pattered on deck ;
Ropes creaked ; then—all grew still,
And he pointed his finger straight in my face
And growled, as a sea-dog will.

“ Do 'ee know who Nelson was ?
That pore little shrivelled form
With the patch on his eye and the pinned-up sleeve
And a soul like a North Sea storm ?

“ Ask of the Devonshire men !
They know, and they'll tell you true ;

He wasn't the pore little chawed-up chap
That Hardy thought he knew.

"He wasn't the man you think !
His patch was a dern disguise !
For he knew that they'd find him out, d'you see,
If they looked him in both his eyes.

"He was twice as big as he seemed ;
But his clothes were cunningly made. 30
He'd both of his hairy arms all right.
The sleeve was a trick of the trade.

"You've heard of sperrits, no doubt ;
Well, there's more in the matter than that !
But he wasn't the patch, and he *wasn't* the sleeve,
And he *wasn't* the laced cocked-hat.

"*Nelson was just—a Ghost !*
You may laugh ! But the Devonshire men
They knew that he'd come when England called,
And they know that he'll come again. 40

"I'll tell you the way it was
(For none of the landsmen know),
And to tell it you right, you must go a-starn
Two hundred years or so.

.

"The waves were lapping and slapping
The same as they are to-day ;
And Drake lay dying aboard his ship
In Nombre Dios Bay.

“ The scent of the foreign flowers
Came floating all around ;
' But I'd give my soul for the smell o' the pitch,'
Says he, ' in Plymouth Sound.'

“ ‘ What shall I do,’ he says,
‘ When the guns begin to roar,
An' England wants me, and me not there
To shatter her foes once more ? ’

“ (You've heard what he said, maybe,
But I'll mark you the p'int's again ;
For I want you to box your compass right
And get my story plain.)

“ ‘ You must take my drum,’ he says,
‘ To the old sea-wall at home ;
And if ever you strike that drum,’ he says,
‘ Why, strike me blind, I'll come ! ’

“ ‘ If England needs me, dead
Or living, I'll rise that day !
I'll rise from the darkness under the sea
Ten thousand miles away.’

“ That's what he said ; and he died ;
An' his pirates, listenin' roun',
With their crimson doublets and jewelled swords
That flashed as the sun went down,

“ They sewed him up in his shroud
With a round-shot top and toe,
To sink him under the salt, sharp sea
Where all good seamen go.

" They lowered him down in the deep,
And there in the sunset light
They boomed a broadside over his grave,
As meanin' to say, ' Good night.'

80

" They sailed away in the dark
To the dear little isle they knew ;
And they hung his drum by the old sea-wall
The same as he told them to.

.
" Two hundred years went by,
And the guns began to roar,
And England was fighting hard for her life,
As ever she fought of yore.

" ' It's only my dead that count,'
She said, as she says to-day ;
' It isn't the ships and it isn't the guns
'Ull sweep Trafalgar's Bay.'

90

" D'you guess who Nelson was ?
You may laugh, but it's true as true !
There was more in that pore little chawed-up chap
Than ever his best friend knew.

" The foe was creepin' close,
In the dark, to our white-cliffed isle ;
They were ready to leap at England's throat
When—oh, you may smile, you may smile ;

100

" But—ask of the Devonshire men ;
For they heard in the dead of night

196 TWENTY-TWO STORY POEMS
The roll of a drum, and they saw *him* pass
On a ship all shining white.

"He stretched out his dead cold face
And he sailed in the grand old way;
The fishes had taken an eye and an arm,
But he *swept* Trafalgar's Bay."

ALFRED NOYES (*b.* 1880)

XIX

FORTY SINGING SEAMEN

In our lands be Beers and Lyons of dyvers colours as ye redd, grene, black and white. And in our land be also unicornes and these Unicornes slee many Lyons. . . . Also there dare no man make a lye in our lande, for if he dyde he sholde incontynent be slegn.—*Mediæval Epistle of Pope Prester John*.

(i)

ACROSS the seas of Wonderland to Mogadore we
plodded,

Forty singing seamen in an old black barque,
And we landed in the twilight where a Polyphemus
nodded

With his battered moon-eye winking red and yellow
through the dark !

For his eye was growing mellow,

Rich and ripe and red and yellow,

As was time, since old Ulysses made him bellow in the
dark !

Cho.—Since Ulysses bunged his eye up with a pine-
torch in the dark !

(ii)

Were they mountains in the gloaming or the giant's ugly
shoulders

Just beneath the rolling eyeball, with its bleared and
vinous glow,

Red and yellow o'er the purple of the pines among the
boulders

And the shaggy horror brooding on the sullen slopes
below,

Were they pines among the boulders

Or the hair upon his shoulders ?

We were only simple seamen, so of course we didn't
know.

Cho.—We were simple singing seamen, so of course we
couldn't know.

-

(iii)

But we crossed a plain of poppies, and we came upon a
fountain

Not of water, but of jewels, like a spray of leaping fire ;
And behind it, in an emerald glade, beneath a golden
mountain

There stood a crystal palace, for a sailor to admire ; 20

For a troop of ghosts came round us,

Which with leaves of bay they crowned us,

Then with grog they wellnigh drowned us, to the
depth of our desire !

Cho.—And 'twas very friendly of them, as a sailor can
admire !

(iv)

There was music all about us, we were growing quite
forgetful

We were only singing seamen from the dirt of London-
town,

Though the nectar that we swallowed seemed to vanish
half regretful

As if we wasn't good enough to take such vittles down,

When we saw a sudden figure,
Tall and black as any nigger,
Like the devil—only bigger—drawing near us with a
frown !

30

Cho.—Like the devil—but much bigger—and he wore a
golden crown !

(v)

And “ what’s all this ? ” he growls at us ! With dignity
we chaunted,

“ Forty singing seamen, sir, as won’t be put upon ! ”

“ What ? Englishmen ? ” he cries. “ Well, if ye don’t
mind being haunted,

Faith, you’re welcome to my palace. I’m the famous
Prester John !

Will ye walk into my palace ?

I don’t bear ’ee any malice !

One and all ye shall be welcome in the halls of Prester
John ! ”

Cho.—So we walked into the palace and the halls of 40
Prester John !

(vi)

Now the door was one great diamond and the hall a hollow
ruby—

Big as Beachy Head, my lads, nay, bigger by a half !

And I sees the mate wi’ mouth agape, a-staring like a
booby,

And the skipper close behind him, with his tongue out
like a calf !

Now the way to take it rightly

Was to walk along politely

Just as if you didn't notice—so I couldn't help but
laugh !

Cho.—For they both forgot their manners and the crew
was bound to laugh !

(vii)

But he took us through his palace and, my lads, as I'm a
sinner,

We walked into an opal like a sunset-coloured cloud. 50

"My dining-room," he says, and, quick as light we saw a
dinner

Spread before us by the fingers of a hidden fairy crowd ;
And the skipper, swaying gently

After dinner, murmurs faintly,

"I looks towards you, Prester John, you've done us
very proud !"

Cho.—And we drank his health with honours, for he
done us very proud !

(viii)

'Then he walks us to his garden where we sees a feathered
demon

Very splendid and important on a sort of spicy tree !

"That's the Phœnix," whispers Prester, "which all
edicated seamen

Knows the only one existent, and *he's* waiting for to 60
flee !

When his hundred years expire

Then he'll set hisself a-fire

And another from his ashes rise most beautiful to see !"

Cho.—With wings of rose and emerald most beautiful to
see !

(ix)

Then he says, "In yonder forest there's a little silver
river,

And whosoever drinks of it, his youth shall never
die!

The centuries go by, but Prester John endures for
ever

With his music in the mountains and his magic on the
sky!

While *your* hearts are growing colder,

While your world is growing older,

70

There's a magic in the distance, where the sea-line
meets the sky."

Cho.—It shall call to singing seamen till the fount o'
song is dry!

(x)

So we thought we'd up and seek it, but that forest fair
defied us.

First a crimson leopard laughs at us most horrible
to see.

Then a sea-green lion came and sniffed and licked his
chops and eyed us,

While a red and yellow unicorn was dancing round a
tree!

We was trying to look thinner,

Which was hard, because our dinner

Must ha' made us very tempting to a cat o' high
degree!

Cho.—Must ha' made us very tempting to the whole so
menarjeree!

(xi)

So we scuttled from that forest and across the poppy
meadows

Where the awful shaggy horror brooded o'er us in the
dark !

And we pushed out from shore again a-jumping at our
shadows,

And pulls away most joyful to the old black barque !

And home again we plodded

While the Polyphemus nodded

With his battered moon-eye winking red and yellow
through the dark.

Cho.—Oh, the moon above the mountains, red and yellow
through the dark !

(xii)

Across the seas of Wonderland to London-town we
blundered,

Forty singing seamen as was puzzled for to know 99

If the visions we had seen was caused by—here again we
pondered—

A tippie in a vision forty thousand years ago.

Could the grog we *dreamt* we swallowed

Make us *dream* of all that followed ?

We were only simple seamen, so of course we didn't
know !

Cho.—We were simple singing seamen, so of course we
could not know !

ALFRED NOYTS (b. 1880)

XX

SPANISH WATERS

SPANISH waters, Spanish waters, you are ringing in
my ears,
Like a slow sweet piece of music from the grey forgotten
years ;
Telling tales, and beating tunes, and bringing weary
thoughts to me
Of the sandy beach at Muertos, where I would that I
could be.

There's a surf breaks on Los Muertos, and it never stops
to roar,
And it's there we came to anchor, and it's there we went
ashore,
Where the blue lagoon is silent amid snags of rotting trees,
Dropping like the clothes of corpses cast up by the seas.

We anchored at Los Muertos when the dipping sun was red,
We left her half a mile to sea, to west of Nigger Head ; 10
And before the mist was on the Cay, before the day was
done,
We were all ashore on Muertos with the gold that we
had won.

We bore it through the marshes in a half-score battered
chests,
Sinking, in the sucking quagmires, to the sunburn on our
breasts,

XXI
THE EXPLORER

1898

THERE'S no sense in going further—it's the edge
of cultivation,"

So they said, and I believed 'em—broke my land and
sowed my crop—

Built my barns and strung my fences in the little border
station

Tucked away below the foothills where the trails run
out and stop.

Till a voice, as bad as Conscience, rang interminable
changes

On one everlasting Whisper day and night repeated—so :
"Something hidden. Go and find it. Go and look
behind the Ranges—

"Something lost behind the Ranges. Lost and waiting
for you. Go !"

So I went, worn out of patience ; never told my nearest
neighbours—

Stole away with pack and ponies—left 'em drinking in 10
the town ;

And the faith that moveth mountains didn't seem to help
my labours

As I faced the sheer main-ranges, whipping up and
leading down.

March by march I puzzled through 'em, turning flanks
and dodging shoulders,

Hurried on in hope of water, headed back for lack of grass;
Till I camped above the tree-line—drifted snow and
naked boulders—

Felt free air astir to windward—knew I'd stumbled on
the Pass.

"Thought to name it for the finder: but that night the
Norther found me—

Froze and killed the plains-bred ponies; so I called
the camp Despair
(It's the Railway Gap to-day, though). Then my Whisper
waked to hound me—

"Something lost behind the Ranges. Over yonder! 20
Go you there!"

Then I knew, the while I doubted—knew His Hand was
certain o'er me.

Still—it might be self-delusion—scores of better men
had died—

I could reach the township living, but . . . He knows
what terror tore me . . .

But I didn't . . . but I didn't. I went down the other
side,

Till the snow ran out in flowers, and the flowers turned
to aloes,

And the aloes sprung to thickets and a brimming
stream ran by;

But the thickets dwined to thorn-scrub, and the water
drained to shallows,

And I dropped again on desert—blasted earth, and
blasting sky. . . .

I remember lighting fires ; I remember sitting by 'em ;
 I remember seeing faces, hearing voices, through the smoke ; 30
 I remember they were fancy—for I threw a stone to try
 'em.
 " Something lost behind the Ranges " was the only
 word they spoke.

I remember going crazy. I remember that I knew it
 When I heard myself hallooming to the funny folk I
 saw.
 'Very full of dreams that desert, but my two legs took me
 through it . . .
 And I used to watch 'em moving with the toes all black
 and raw.

But at last the country altered—White Man's country
 past disputing—
 Rolling grass and open timber, with a hint of hills
 behind—
 There I found me food and water, and I lay a week re-
 cruiting.
 'Got my strength and lost my nightmares. Then I 40
 entered on my find.

Thence I ran my first rough survey—chose my trees and
 blazed and ringed 'em—
 Week by week I pried and sampled—week by week my
 findings grew.
 Saul he went to look for donkeys, and by God he found
 a kingdom !
 But by God, who sent His Whisper, I had struck the
 worth of two !

Up along the hostile mountains, where the hair-poised
snow-slide shivers—

Down and through the big fat marshes that the virgin
ore-bed stains,

Till I heard the mile-wide mutterings of unimagined
rivers,

And beyond the nameless timber saw illimitable plains !

'Plotted sites of future cities, traced the easy grades
between 'em ;

Watched unharnessed rapids wasting fifty thousand 50
head an hour ;

Counted leagues of water-frontage through the axe-ripe
woods that screen 'em—

Saw the plant to feed a people—up and waiting for the
power !

Well I know who'll take the credit—all the clever chaps
that followed—

Came, a dozen men together—never knew my desert-
fears ;

Tracked me by the camps I'd quitted, used the water-
holes I'd hollowed.

They'll go back and do the talking. *They'll* be called
the Pioneers !

They will find my sites of townships—not the cities that
I set there.

They will rediscover rivers—not my rivers heard at
night.

By my own old marks and bearings they will show me
how to get there.

By the lonely cairns I builded they will guide my feet 60
aright.

Have I named one single river? Have I claimed one
single acre?

Have I kept one single nugget—(barring samples)?
No, not I!

Because my price was paid me ten times over by my
Maker.

But you wouldn't understand it. You go up and
occupy.

Ores you'll find there; wood and cattle; water-transit
sure and steady

(That should keep the railway rates down), coal and
iron at your doors.

God took care to hide that country till He judged His
people ready,

Then He chose me for His Whisper, and I've found it,
and it's yours!

Yes, your "Never-never country"—yes, your "edge of
cultivation"

And "no sense in going further"—till I crossed the 70
range to see.

God forgive me! No, *I* didn't. It's God's present to
our nation.

Anybody might have found it but—His Whisper came
to Me!

RUDYARD KIPLING (*b.* 1865)

XXII

LAST LINES

AS I laye a-thynkyng, a-thynkyng, a-thynkyng,
 Merrie sang the Birde as she sat upon the spraye ;
 There came a noble Knyghte,
 With his hauberke shynynge brighte,
 And his gallant heart was lyghte,
 Free and gaye ;
 As I lay a-thynkyng, he rode upon his waye.

As I laye a-thynkyng, a-thynkyng, a-thynkyng,
 Sadly sang the Birde as she sat upon the tree !
 There seem'd a crimson plain,
 Where a gallant Knyghte lay slayne,
 And a steed with broken rein
 Ran free,
 As I laye a-thynkyng, most pitiful to see !

As I laye a-thynkyng, a-thynkyng, a-thynkyng,
 Merrie sang the Birde as she sat upon the boughe ;
 A lovely Mayde came bye,
 And a gentil youth was nyghe,
 And he breathed many a syghe
 And a vowe ;
 As I laye a-thynkyng, her hearte was gladsome now.

As I laye a-thynkyng, a-thynkyng, a-thynkyng,
 Sadly sang the Birde as she sat upon the thorne,

No more a youth was there,
 But a Maiden rent her haire,
 And cried in sad despaire,
 " That I was borne ! "

As I laye a-thynkyng, she perished forlorne.

As I laye a-thynkyng, a-thynkyng, a-thynkyng,
 Sweetly sang the Birde as she sat upon the briar ;
 There came a lovely Childe,
 And his face was meek and mild,
 Yet joyously he smiled

30

 On his sire ;

As I laye a-thynkyng, a Cherub mote admire.

But I laye a-thynkyng, a-thynkyng, a-thynkyng,
 And sadly sang the Birde as it perch'd upon a bier ;
 That joyous smile was gone,
 And the face was white and wan,
 As the downe upon the Swan

40

 Doth appear,

As I laye a-thynkyng—O ! bitter flow'd the tear !

As I laye a-thynkyng, the golden sun was sinking,
 O merrie sang that Birde as it glitter'd on her breast
 With a thousand gorgeous dyes,
 While, soaring to the skies,
 'Mid the stars she seem'd to rise,
 As to her nest ;

As I laye a-thynkyng, her meaning was exprest :—

 " Follow, follow me away,

50

 It boots not to delay,"—

 'Twas so she seem'd to saye,

 " HERE IS REST ! "

EXERCISES

The Roman numerals correspond with the numbers of the poems.

I

1. What do you think were the thoughts and feelings of Ulysses as he clung to the ram during Polyphemus' speech (lines 296-311) ?
2. Pick out ten phrases that give vivid pictures.
3. Do you think the epithet "wily" was a good one to apply to Ulysses ? Point out the best instance of his craftiness.

II

1. Show that there is in this story nothing that could not have happened in Europe ; for instance, in the Border country.
2. What is the value of the description of arms and weapons in the third section ?
3. Write a character-sketch of Arjun.

III

1. Do you find anything in this poem corresponding with popular ideas about Red Indians ?
2. In lines 62-67 the Indian corn is personified ; try to write a similar description of barley.
3. Explain the allegory of the poem.

IV

1. Compare the metre of this poem with that of No. III. Which do you think is the more suitable for narrative purposes ? Which is the easier to write ?

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2. Trace the working of the Curse.
3. Compare the atmosphere of this story with that of *Ulysses and Polyphemus*. Have Ulysses and Loki anything in common?

V

1. It has been objected that some of the similes in this poem are too long and that they impede the action. What is your opinion?
2. What effect is intended by the quiet opening and close?
3. Describe, in verse or prose, Rustum's return to Seistan with the body of Sohrab.

VI

1. Describe Una's feelings during the first part of the fight.
2. Write a description of the Dragon, and make a sketch of him.
3. With whom do your sympathies lie—with the Dragon, or with the Red Cross Knight?

VII

1. What is your opinion of Sir Bedivere's conduct?
2. Compare the opening and close of this poem with the opening and close of *Sohrab and Rustum*. Which produce the sense of peace most effectively?
3. Rewrite the following passage from Malory in blank verse:

So Sir Arthur and Merlin lit, and tied their horses to two trees, and so they went into the ship, and when they came to the sword that the hand held, Sir Arthur took it by the handles and took it with him, and the arm and the hand went under the water. And so they came unto the land, and rode forth.

VIII

1. What do you think is the story behind this ballad?
2. What is the purpose of the repetition?
3. Why did Edward curse his mother?

IX

1. Which verse of this ballad calls up the most vivid picture ?
2. Where was Elfland situated ?
3. Another version of this ballad gives verses 6 and 7 as follows :

The lady rade, True Thomas ran,
 Untill they cam to a water wan ;
 O it was night, and nae delight,
 And Thomas wade aboon the knee.

It was dark night, and nae starn-light,
 And on they waded lang days three,
 And they heard the roaring o a flood,
 And Thomas a waefou man was he.

Which version do you think is preferable ? Why ?

X

1. It has been said, " This ballad is one of the best in the world, and enough to make a moss-trooper of any young Borderer." Do you agree with this ? Support your opinion by reference to other ballads.
2. What kind of man was the Laird's Jock ? How does he compare with the other Jock ?
3. Write an additional verse describing the meeting between Jock o the Side and his mother " auld Downie."

XI

1. What is the allegorical application of this poem ?
2. Which verse calls up the most vivid picture ?
3. What are the chief differences between this ballad and the old ones ?

XII

1. Rewrite lines 31-38 in the same metre as that of *Thomas Rhymer*.

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2. Line 188 refers to "the speech he made." Write a short version of that speech.
3. Write the Ensign's description of the 'hold-up.'

XIII

1. This and the last poem are both about highwaymen. Which poem do you prefer, and why?
2. Can you suggest any reason for the change of metre in Part II?
3. What was the "dreadful Thing" that confronted Dick Turpin at the gate of York?

XIV

1. Write a description of the blazing hall.
2. What part does Nature play in helping to create a romantic atmosphere?
3. In the first MS. lines 243-246 read :

Where's Bertram now? In fury driven,
The general flame ascends to heaven,
The gather'd groups of soldiers gaze
Upon the red and roaring blaze.

Can you suggest any reasons for the change?

XV

1. Write a character-sketch of Tam.
2. This poem contains an often-quoted example of a good simile. Can you find it?
3. What story did Tam tell his wife on his arrival home?

XVI

1. The writer of this poem was a great decorative artist. Are there any indications of this?
2. Write a prose description of Edward III.

3. The following is taken from Froissart's description of the battle of Crecy. Rewrite it in verse of the same metre as this poem.

Then they made great fires and lighted up torches and candles, because it was very dark. Then the king came down from the little hill where as he stood, and of all that day till then his helmet came never off his head. Then he went with all his battle to his son the prince, and embraced him, and said, Fair son, God give you good perseverance, ye are my good son, thus ye have acquitted you nobly ; ye are worthy to keep a realm.

XVII

1. Write a description of the sailing of the *Rover* as written by some one watching her leave the harbour.
2. Make a list of any other poems or stories you have read about the Spanish Main during the Elizabethan period. Which did you enjoy most ?
3. Write a short account of the last fight of the *Rover*.

XVIII

1. Write a Norfolk man's reply to this poem. (Nelson was born in Norfolk.)
2. Compare the metre of this poem with that of other ballads in this book.
3. Read Newbolt's poem *Drake's Drum*. Compare it with this poem.

XIX

1. What other poem in this book is recalled by verse 1 ?
2. Suggest a few more strange animals the " singing seamen " might have met in the forest.
3. Write a short account of this adventure as it might have been told by one of the seamen to his wife on his return to London.

XX

1. Write the story of the burying of the treasure.
2. Comment on the skilful use of proper names in this poem.

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3. Write an extra verse, to follow verse 6, giving more details of the treasure.

XXI

1. Are there any notable characteristics about the metre and choice of words in this poem ?
2. Draw from imagination a map of the explorer's journey; invent necessary names.
3. Write a few extracts from the explorer's diary.

XXII

1. What is the purpose of the curious spelling in this poem ?
2. Write a full account of the story suggested by verses 1 and 2.
3. What is the general impression produced by the reading aloud of this poem ?

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